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STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Twenty-sixth session
4-13 February 1991
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

3. Special issues:

   (a) Increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services;

   (b) Report on the effects of structural adjustment programmes and the debt burden on the work programmes of national and international statistical services;

4. National accounts and balances:

   (a) System of National Accounts (SNA);

   (b) System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS);

   (c) Links between the System of National Accounts and the System of Balances of the National Economy;

5. International economic classifications.

6. Service statistics.

7. Price statistics.

8. Industrial statistics.

9. Demographic, social and environment statistics:

   (a) Population and housing censuses;

   (b) Civil registration and vital statistics;

   (c) Social statistics and indicators;

   (d) Patterns of consumption: qualitative aspects of development;

   (e) Environment statistics;

   (f) Human settlement statistics;

10. Development and integration of methodological work.

11. Technical co-operation:

   (a) Technical co-operation in statistics;

   (b) National Household Survey Capability Programme;

   (c) World Bank household survey initiatives;

   (d) Co-ordination issues related to the National Household Survey Capability Programme, the Social Dimensions of Adjustment project and the Living Standards Measurement Study;

12. Co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes.

13. Programme questions:

   (a) Programme performance and implementation;

   (b) Programme objectives and planning;

14. Draft provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session of the Commission.

15. Report of the Commission on its twenty-sixth session.

Annotations

1. Election of officers

In accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure and past practice, the Commission will elect, at its first meeting, a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur to serve from the beginning of the twenty-sixth session of the Commission to the beginning of the twenty-seventh session.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

The items on the provisional agenda and the corresponding documentation were considered by the Commission at its twenty-fifth session 1/ and approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1989/115 of 22 May 1989.

The Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination considered the provisional agenda and documentation at its thirteenth session (see E/CN.3/1991/2, paras. 9-32). The Working Group endorsed the agenda and made the following additions and modifications: (a) it added sub-item 9 (b), Civil registration and vital statistics; sub-item 9 (f), Human settlement statistics; and sub-item 11 (d), Co-ordination issues related to the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP), the Social Dimensions of Adjustment project (SDA) and the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS); and (b) it changed the numbering of sub-item 9 (b) (Social statistics and indicators) to 9 (c); sub-item 9 (c) (Patterns of comsumption: qualititive aspects of development) to 9 (d); and sub-item 9 (d) (Environment statistics) to 9 (e).

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat on the organization of the work of the session (E/CN.3/1991/L.1)

3. Special issues

(a) Increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services

The Secretary-General will submit a report describing the national and international experiences with respect to increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services. The report, based on an inquiry sent to selected national and international statistical offices, will discuss the current level and nature of user awareness of statistical outputs and services and will provide a description of the measures being taken to increase that awareness. It is hoped that the report and the Commission's discussion of the topic will help to disseminate those experiences for the benefit of all national and international statistical services.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services (E/CN.3/1991/3)

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(b) Report on the effects of structural adjustment programmes and the debt burden on the work programmes of national and international statistical services

The Secretary-General will submit a report describing the implications that the overall developments of structural adjustment and the debt crisis of developing countries have had on the work of national and international statistical services.

The report examines a number of general questions on structural adjustment and the nature of foreign debt so as to give a basic understanding of the problem and its magnitude. It covers both the positive and the negative aspects of structural adjustment and their implications for economic and financial statistics. It discusses the impact of those on national and international statistical services in terms of the short-term and long-term curtailment of ongoing and planned statistical programmes as well as new and emerging data needs and other requirements such as technological and programmatic needs.

The report also discusses the fourth United Nations development decade and the needed data and data systems for monitoring and evaluating the development strategy, covering not only elements relating to economic growth but also the human condition, and a review of the necessary statistical methodology and instruments.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the effects of structural adjustment programmes and debt burden on the work programmes of national and international statistical services (E/CN.3/1991/4)

4. National accounts and balances

(a) System of National Accounts (SNA)

The Secretary-General will submit a progress report summarizing the co-ordination of the work programme by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts. The report will provide an overview of the main changes included in the draft SNA chapters reflecting the conclusions reached by SNA expert groups. It will also review the discrepancies between the proposed changes and the recommendations contained in the reports of the regional meetings and of the Expert Group on the Reconciliation of SNA/MPS Standards on National Accounting. In addition the report will deal with Handbooks and future implementation of the SNA, and will present a timetable for the final phase of the SNA review (1991-1992) before its expected adoption in 1993 at the twenty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission.

Each of the five regional commissions will present a report on the outcome of their regional meetings on the revision of the SNA. The reports will deal with main concepts, classifications and structure of accounts and tables of the revised SNA from the point of view of each region. The reports will also give regional views on the implementation of the revised SNA (including, for example, needs in terms of training, fellowships, technical advisory services and software).

For annotations on the reports of the meetings of the Expert Group on the Reconciliation of SNA/MPS Standards on National Accounting and related activities, see item 4 (b) below. For annotations on the report on progress made in the development of environment statistics and future plans, see item 9 (e) below.

The first complete draft of the revised SNA will be presented to the Commission for comments.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the review of the System of National Accounts (SNA) (E/CN.3/1991/5)

Report of the Working Party of the Conference of European Statisticians on the System of National Accounts (SNA) (E/CN.3/1991/6)

Report of the Economic Commission for Africa Expert Group Meeting on the System of National Accounts (SNA) (E/CN.3/1991/7)

Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Expert Group Meeting on the System of National Accounts (SNA) (E/CN.3/1991/8)

Report of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Expert Group Meeting on the System of National Accounts (SNA) (E/CN.3/1991/9)

Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Expert Group Meeting on the System of National Accounts (SNA) (E/CN.3/1991/10)

Report of the meetings of the Expert Group on the Reconciliation of SNA/MPS Standards on National Accounting and related activities (E/CN.3/1991/11)

Report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the development of environment statistics and future plans (E/CN.3/1991/23)

Draft of the revised System of National Accounts (SNA) (PROVISIONAL, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/2/Rev.4)

(b) System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)

The Secretary-General will submit a note transmitting to the Statistical Commission a report prepared by the Secretariat of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) on any elaboration of MPS. It is the revised version of the report which was considered by the Expert Group meeting convened by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) in 1989.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) on the elaboration of MPS (E/CN.3/1991/12)

(c) Links between the System of National Accounts and the System of Balances of the National Economy

The Secretary-General will submit a report on progress made in the development of a handbook on SNA/MPS reconciliation. Since the work on the handbook is closely linked to parallel work carried out by CMEA, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and by individual pairs of countries on a bilateral basis, and reflects the conclusions reached by meetings organized by CMEA, ECE, and other forums, the report will also give an overall account of the parallel activities carried out and the conclusions of the meetings. A summary reference to the conclusions of the Expert Group on the Reconciliation of SNA/MPS Standards on National Accounting (Moscow, 4-9 December 1989) will also be made in the report. Further details of the meeting, however, will be described in another document (E/CN.3/1991/11).

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the harmonization of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS) (E/CN.3/1991/13)

Report of the Secretary-General on the meetings of the Expert Group on the Reconciliation of SNA/MPS Standards on National Accounting and related activities (E/CN.3/1991/11)

5. International economic classifications

The International Labour Office will submit a report on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE). It will present the progress of the joint ILO/Statistical Office work to develop proposals for improvements in the conceptual basis and definitions of the International Classification of Status in Employment, and will deepen the classification by the inclusion of sub-groups. Included also in the report will be a general review of national practices, including the scope and limitations of the classifications used in population and housing censuses and other data sources.

Documentation

Report of the International Labour Office on the progress of work on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) (E/CN.3/1991/14)

6. Service statistics

The Secretary-General will submit a report on the work done by national and international agencies in the field of service statistics. The report will focus on data compilation and methodological development. It will review the availability of basic statistics, methodological developments in statistics related to service-producing activities and the measurement, in constant prices, of value-added in services activities. The report will also describe the efforts of international statistical agencies to achieve inter-country comparability of services statistics and to improve their availability, through technical co-operation and development and the dissemination of technical documentation.

The Secretary-General will also present a report on service statistics dealing with a substantive topic, prepared by the Voorburg Group. As provisionally agreed at the October 1989 meeting of the Voorburg Group, the report will describe the format of a standard survey of producers of computer services. The aim of such a survey would be to obtain prices and quantities of the related Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) categories of services sold domestically and abroad. Also envisaged is the development of a model, including supporting methodology which would be made available to the international community.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the work done by national and international agencies in the field of service statistics (E/CN.3/1991/15)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Voorburg Group on service statistics dealing with a substantive topic (E/CN.3/1991/16)

7. Price statistics

The Secretary-General will submit a report on the International Comparison Project (ICP). The report will describe the finalization of the phase V comparisons (reference year, 1985) and will discuss progress in the phase VI comparisons. A separate section will summarize the conclusions of the 1988 and 1989 seminars on ICP methodology and the first experiences of the "rolling base" comparisons applied in the comparisons of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The methodological aspects of the linkage of the regional comparisons and the reliability of a world comparison on the basis of the experiences in phases IV and V will be considered. Progress in preparing an ICP handbook will also be reported. The organizational and financial problems of the ICP, with special attention to the co-ordination of the world comparison, will be described. The report will also include a review of experiences of organizations and other users in the application of ICP results.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in phase VI of the International Comparison Programme (ICP) and related issues (E/CN.3/1991/17)

8. Industrial statistics

The Secretary-General will submit a report on the World Programme of Industrial Statistics. The report will review the 1983 World Programme in the context of its purposes, by comparing its outcome to that of the 1973 Programme, its effectiveness in encouraging benchmark enumerations and the apparent impact of the regional training workshops associated with it. The report will also set out proposals with respect to the next World Programme of Industrial Statistics, taking into account the views of the regional commissions, specialized agencies and experts in the field of industrial statistics.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the World Programme of Industrial Statistics (E/CN.3/1991/18)

9. Demographic, social and environment statistics

(a) Population and housing censuses

The Secretary-General will submit a report on the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme as part of the document on general methodological work (E/CN.3/1991/24). It will summarize the various preparations undertaken by the Secretariat and other organizations designed to assist countries to carry out the 1990 round of population and housing censuses. It will also discuss briefly some aspects of quality appraisal and the development of census data bases to promote maximum dissemination and utilization of the census results. Support given to developing countries in terms of technical co-operation for their population and housing censuses will be described. Also included will be a listing of the dates of national population and/or housing censuses taken or anticipated during the decade 1985-1994.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on general development and integration of methodological work, including experience and progress made in international classifications (E/CN.3/1991/24, sect. II.D)

(b) Civil registration and vital statistics

The Secretary-General will submit a report on civil registration and vital statistics. It will, in section I, present an overview of the progress made and problems encountered in improving the civil registration and vital statistics systems in developing countries. Section II will focus on important developments in civil registration and vital statistics, including emerging issues in improving civil registration and advances in data-processing technology, dissemination and use of data. In the light of these developments, it will also consider technical co-operation needs, including a newly initiated programme for accelerating the improvement of vital statistics and civil registration systems in collaboration with various interested organizations.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress on civil registration and vital statistics (E/CN.3/1991/19)

(c) Social statistics and indicators

The Secretary-General will submit a progress report on the development of a co-ordinated United Nations system data base for selected social statistics and indicators of common interest at national and international levels to assist in

monitoring social goals in the 1990s pursuant to the discussion of the Working Group of the Statistical Commission at its last session. The report will describe the concept of an international data base in social statistics, review common social statistics requirements at national and international levels and current compilation and co-ordination arrangements in light of technical possibilities, and consider series and classifications to be included. It will also describe plans for technical co-operation to developing countries to establish and maintain national data bases used to monitor progress in achieving social goals in the 1990s.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the development of a co-ordinated data base for the United Nations system for selected social statistics and indicators of common interest and the development of related national data bases (E/CN.3/1991/20)

(d) Patterns of consumption: qualititive aspects of development

The Secretary-General and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) will submit the final report summarizing the results of case-studies carried out by UNRISD on qualitative aspects of development, pursuant to the request of the Statistical Commission at its last session (para. 159 (e)) and to resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council (1987/6 of 26 May 1987 and 1989/4 of 22 May 1989) and General Assembly (40/179 of 17 December 1985 and 44/234 of 22 December 1989). Pursuant to the request of the Working Group of the Statistical Commission at its last session, the report will also report on preparations for the international statistical meeting on indicators of patterns of consumption, planned to be held in Morocco in 1990, and related co-ordination of that work with national and international statistical activities.

Documentation

Final report on the case-studies carried out by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on qualitative aspects of development and on the preparations for the planned international statistical meeting on the subject (E/CN.3/1991/21)

(e) Environment statistics

The Secretary-General will submit two reports. The first - on methods of environment statistics developed under the work programme of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) - will be prepared by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), following the request of the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session. It will contain descriptions of the various relevant classifications and other methodological aspects that have been adopted by CES. Information on experiences with those methodologies will also be included, with a view to identifying those classifications and methodological outputs of CES that may be particularly appropriate for international adaptation and use.

The second report will focus on progress made in the development of environment statistics and future plans. It will describe the technical report "Concepts and methods of environment statistics - Statistics of the natural environment", and progress made in the development of a handbook of environmental accounting. The work of selected national statistical offices and co-operation with those offices will be described, based on the contributions to and results of the Inter-governmental Working Group on the Advancement of Environment Statistics (Oslo, 2-4 May 1990). The report will review progress in the development of environment statistics programmes at the regional level, and co-operation with international organizations. The feasibility of the compilation and dissemination of environment statistics at the global level will be considered in the points for discussion.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on methods of environment statistics developed under the work programme of the Conference of European Statisticians (E/CN.3/1991/22)

Report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the development of environmental statistics and future plans (E/CN.3/1991/23)

(f) Human settlement statistics

The Secretary-General will submit a report on human settlements statistics as part of the document on general methodological work (E/CN.3/1991/24). The report reviews work accomplished since the twenty-first session of the Statistical Commission when human settlements statistics were last discussed. It also reviews the ongoing programme, on a much reduced scale, on data collection and dissemination and how future work will continue in the light of mandated reductions in resources. Methodological work on an expert group meeting and the study of methods and problems of integrating housing and human settlements statistics with other social and economic statistics are also reported.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the general development and integration of methodological work, including experience and progress made in international classifications (E/CN.3/1991/24, sect. II.E)

10. General development and integration of methodological work

The Secretary-General will submit a summary report on ongoing work in the areas of international classifications, energy, international trade and transport statistics, population and housing censuses, housing and human settlements statistics and statistical programmes for social indicators. Those are areas where no major discussion of methodological issues is expected but on which the Commission needs to be informed of developments. The report will summarize the results of work-sharing undertaken in intergovernmental working groups and other approaches that have been adopted to accelerate statistical development. The

report will also provide an analysis of resources allocated to the different areas of methodological work undertaken by the Statistical Office. The section on trade statistics will include a brief report on the ASYCUDA (Automated System for Customs Data) project.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on general development and integration of methodological work, including experience and progress made in international classifications (E/CN.3/1991/24)

11. Technical co-operation

(a) Technical co-operation in statistics

Under this agenda item the Secretary-General will submit a report dealing with technical co-operation activities in statistics. It includes a summary of expenditures in technical co-operation programmes in statistics during 1987-1990 by the United Nations system and by several multilateral organizations. Issues and problems in training at the global, regional and country levels are addressed, including training in the administration and management of national statistical services. Issues in statistical data-processing and informatics are addressed, including the use of microcomputers by developing countries in statistical data processing and, in particular, in the data capture of returns from censuses and surveys. The report will also review available information on priorities for statistical development in terms of those established by the recipient countries, the multilateral and bilateral donor agencies and various international programmes with technical co-operation components. The report will also address the effects of structural adjustment programmes and debt burden on the work programmes of national and international statistical services.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on technical co-operation in statistics (E/CN.3/1991/25)

Report of the Secretary-General on the effects of structural adjustment programmes and debt burden on the work programmes of national and international statistical services (E/CN.3/1991/4)

(b) National Household Survey Capability Programme

The Secretary-General will submit a report on progress made in the implementation of the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP), the present status of the project and the work programme envisaged up to the end of 1992. It will refer to the country-level survey activities, among others, supported under the programme, technical studies undertaken and training programmes organized. It will also refer to the co-ordination of the programme with other internationally sponsored household survey programmes and other related statistical activities such as population and housing censuses, social statistics and indicators.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress of the National Household Survey Capability Programme: progress in programme implementation and co-ordination (E/CN.3/1991/26)

(c) World Bank household survey initiatives

The World Bank will submit a report on the progress made in implementing its two initiatives in the field of integrated household surveys, conducted under the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) and the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) project. The report will review the experience gained, with particular reference to meeting national needs for data and data analysis. It will also review methodological developments, the experience gained in the use of microcomputers in processing survey data, and changes introduced in survey design in the light of experience and emerging country needs for data. The report will deal briefly with future work plans of the World Bank in promoting the two programmes. In a final section of the report the progress made in co-ordinating LSMS and the SDA project with other international survey initiatives, both globally and at the country level, will be reported.

Documentation

Report of the World Bank on progress made in implementing the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) and the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) project (E/CN.3/1991/27)

(d) Co-ordination issues related to the National Household Survey Capability Programme, the Social Dimensions of Adjustment project and the Living Standards Measurement Study

Co-ordination between NHSCP, SDA and LSMS will be discussed under this sub-item on the basis of the Secretary-General's report on the National Household Survey Capability Programme, submitted under sub-item 11 (a), and the World Bank's report on SDA and LSMS, submitted under sub-item 11 (b). The Commission will discuss co-ordination of the three initiatives with other statistical programmes which include household survey components, especially the programme considered under agenda item 9 (c), Social statistics and indicators, and - where relevant - co-ordination with other data-collection activities, such as population and housing censuses.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the development of a co-ordinated data base for the United Nations system for selected social statistics and indicators of common interest and the development of related national data bases (relevant segments) (E/CN.3/1991/20)

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress of the National Household Survey Capability Programme: progress in programme implementation and co-ordination (E/CN.3/1991/26)

Report of the World Bank on progress made in implementing the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) and the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) project (E/CN.3/1991/27)

12. Co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes

The Commission will have before it the report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination on its thirteenth session, held in Geneva from 11 to 14 September 1989. The report includes a review of progress and future plans on the revision of the System of National Accounts and on the International Comparison Programme, a review of the provisional agenda and the documentation for the twenty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission, a review of comments made by members of the Statistical Commission on the report of the Secretary-General of the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session on general development and integration of methodological work (E/CN.3/1989/15), consideration of co-ordination of the statistical data-collection activities of international organizations, including ad hoc collection activities by non-statistical units of international organizations, consideration of ways to accelerate statistical development while ensuring co-ordination in selected fields of statistics and consideration of possible changes to the composition of the Working Group.

In addition, the co-ordination aspects of the report of the Secretary-General on the statistical work of international organizations mentioned under agenda item 13 (a), and the report of the Secretary-General on the plans of international organizations in the field of statistics, mentioned under agenda item 13 (b), will be considered.

Documentation

Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination of its thirteenth session (E/CN.3/1991/2)

Report of the Secretary-General on the statistical work of international organizations (E/CN.3/1991/28)

Report of the Secretary-General on the plans of international organizations in the field of statistics (E/CN.3/1991/29)

13. Programme questions

(a) Programme performance and implementation

The Secretary-General will submit a report containing an overall review of the principal statistical activities of international organizations for the years 1988 and 1989 and approximately the first six months of 1990. It will concentrate on major achievements and important changes in the activities of the organizations. The Secretary-General will also submit a report containing information on significant developments which have occurred since the various substantive reports for the Commission were completed and information on any important developments in areas of work not already covered by the agenda of the Commission.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 39/238, the Commission will also have before it the relevant parts of the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1988-1989 and of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on the work of its twenty-ninth session (A/44/16). 2/

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the statistical work of international organizations (E/CN.3/1991/28)

Report of the Secretary-General on updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1991/30)

(b) Programme objectives and planning

The Commission will have before it a note by the Secretary-General providing information on the proposed work programme of the Statistical Office for 1992-1993, including relevant information on the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. The document will serve, inter alia, as a covering note for the conference room paper containing the proposed work programme for 1992-1993 (E/CN.3/1991/CRP.1) and the General Assembly document containing the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 for statistics [A/45/6 (Prog. 24)].

With regard to the work programme for 1992-1993, the report will contain, in addition to the proposed work programme of the Statistical Office for 1992-1993, (a) priorities proposed for 1992-1993, (b) comparative information on the number of professional work-months assigned to each programme element for 1990-1991 and 1992-1993 and (c) for each output approved for 1990-1991, the initial target date for completion and the stage of completion reached, and for each delayed output, the revised target date.

With regard to the medium-term plan, the Commission will recall that at its twenty-fifth session it considered preliminary proposals for the plan, which has since been revised to conform with the final instructions issued on its preparation. The proposed plan now before the Commission [A/45/6 (Prog. 24)] reflects these revisions, which are as follows: (a) intergovernmental and secretarial objectives have been consolidated, (b) material under each sub-programme relating to the time prior to the plan period has been eliminated, (c) legislative authority has been updated and expanded. In addition, substantive changes were made to accommodate comments received from agencies describing recent developments. The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination considered the proposed medium-term plan at its thirtieth session.

Another document submitted to the Commission for consideration will be a report by the Secretary-General on the plans of international organizations in the area of statistics. The report will cover new additions to and major changes in existing plans for the relevant plan periods of the international organizations.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General on the proposed work programme of the Statistical Office for 1992-1993, including relevant information on the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (E/CN.3/1991/31)

Report of the Secretary-General on the plans of international organizations in the field of statistics (E/CN.3/1991/29)

Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997: Major Programme IV. International Economic Co-operation for Development. Programme 24. Statistics [A/45/6 (Prog. 24)]

14. Provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session of the Commission

In accordance with rule 9 of the rules of procedure, the Commission will have before it the provisional agenda for its twenty-seventh session, together with an indication of the documents to be submitted under each item and the legislative authority for their preparation.

In resolution 1979/41, the Council decided that the provisional agenda for its subsidiary bodies, together with the list of requested documentation, should be submitted to the Council for its review, in order, inter alia, to establish greater consistency between the requests for documentation and the medium-term plan and the programme budget.

By resolution 1989/114 on further measures for the implementation of Council resolution 1988/77 on the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council, the Council urged its subsidiary bodies to implement fully resolution 1979/41 in submitting to the Council for consideration their provisional agenda together with the list of requested documentation, with a view to ensuring greater consistency in requests for documentation and improving reporting procedures. In this connection, it will be recalled that the Council urged all its subsidiary bodies to exercise the utmost restraint in making requests of the Secretary-General for new reports and studies and to implement fully the decisions of the Council and of the General Assembly with respect to the control and limitation of documentation (Council resolutions 1981/83 and 1982/50).

By decision 1983/163, the Council decided to request the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of intergovernmental and expert bodies, before decisions are adopted, any request for documentation that exceeds the ability of the Secretariat to prepare and process on time and within its approved resources and to draw the attention of intergovernmental bodies to areas where duplication of documentation is likely to occur and/or where opportunities for integrating or consolidating documents that deal with related or similar themes might exist, with a view to rationalizing documentation.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat on the draft provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session of the Commission

15. Report of the Commission on its twenty-sixth session

The Commission will adopt the report on its twenty-sixth session, which will be submitted to the Economic and Social Council.

Attention is drawn to Council resolution 1989/114 on further measures for the implementation of Council resolution 1988/77 on the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council, in which the Council requested its subsidiary bodies to highlight policy recommendations and decisions resulting from their deliberations for consideration and appropriate action by the Council.

Notes

1/ Official records of the Economic and Social Council, 1989, Supplement No. 3 (E/1989/21), chaps. I and XIV.

2/ To be issued in Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/44/16).

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ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Provisional agenda

Corrigendum

Page 6, paragraph 5, line 2

After Statistical Office insert of the United Nations

Page 7, line 5

For Committee for Programme and Co-ordination read Central Product Classification

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Item 12 of the provisional agenda*

CO-ORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES

Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination on its thirteenth session

SUMMARY

At its thirteenth session, the Working Group reviewed progress and plans on the revision of the System of National Accounts (paras. 4-6) and on the International Comparison Programme (paras. 7 and 8), reviewed and finalized the provisional agenda for the twenty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission (para. 9), made decisions and suggestions concerning the documentation and its content (paras. 11-68), reviewed comments that had been made by members of the Statistical Commission on the report of the Secretary-General on general development and integration of methodological work (E/CN.3/1989/15), which was submitted to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session (paras. 69-73), reviewed co-ordination of the statistical data collection activities of international organizations, including ad hoc collection activities by non-statistical units of international organizations (paras. 74-84), considered ways to accelerate statistical development while ensuring co-ordination in selected fields of statistics (paras. 85-87) and considered possible changes to the composition of the Working Group (paras. 88-90).

* E/CN.3/1991/1.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The thirteenth session of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination of the Statistical Commission was held at Geneva from 11 to 14 September 1989. The agenda, as adopted, is contained in the annex to the present report.

2. Pursuant to the decision of the Working Group at its earlier sessions, the officers of the Commission who attended served as officers of the Working Group, with L. A. Beccaria (Argentina) acting as Chairman of the session. Other members present were: A. M. Hallouda (Egypt), E. Oti Boateng (Ghana), H. Kudo (Japan), S. M. Ishaque (Pakistan), N. G. Belov (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and H. Habermann (United States of America).

3. The following were represented: Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), International Labour Organisation (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank and International Statistical Institute (ISI).

II. REVISION OF THE SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS (SNA)

4. The Working Group considered the matter on the basis of an oral report from the Director of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and an informal note prepared by that Office reporting that:

(a) The Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat had engaged consultants to further elaborate and draft sections of the revised SNA on the accounting framework, satellite accounts and adaptation of SNA to special circumstances and to prepare a glossary;

(b) A meeting of the United Nations Expert Group on SNA Co-ordination had been held in New York from 12 to 21 July 1989; 12 national accounts experts from the enlarged core group of experts from developing and developed countries had participated; the Expert Group had agreed that the draft chapters (of the revised SNA) so far available substantially fulfilled the goal of clarification but that the text should be augmented by concise descriptions and the "Overview of the system" needed to be elaborated in greater detail;

(c) Regional meetings had been convened by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in June 1989 and by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT) in July 1989, in preparation for the meeting of the United Nations Expert Group on SNA Co-ordination mentioned in (b) above and the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in May 1989 in preparation for the meeting of the Expert Group on the Reconciliation of SNA/MPS Standards on National Accounting and Related Matters to be held at Moscow in December 1989 [MPS: System of Balances of the National Economy];

(d) The future programme of the revision process included one more meeting of the United Nations Expert Group on SNA Co-ordination in September 1989, to review the remaining available draft chapters, the meeting of the Expert Group on the Reconciliation of SNA/MPS Standards on National Accounting and Related Matters, mentioned in (c) above and five regional meetings organized by each of the regional commissions to discuss the entire first draft of the revised SNA;

(e) The Inter-Secretariat Working Group on the SNA, at its meeting in July 1989, had agreed that the draft of the revised SNA would be distributed in January 1990, even if it was not possible for the United Nations Expert Group on SNA Co-ordination to consider all chapters of the revised SNA as originally envisaged; the draft would be translated into Spanish and French during the first months of 1990 so that it would be available in good time in the appropriate languages for the regional meetings; in the light of subsequent consultations, it was agreed that the regional commissions would be asked whether they thought a further review of the revised SNA would be necessary on their part, given its stage of development;

(f) The Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat had made provision for two expert group meetings in the biennium 1990-1991, one in 1990 and one after the Statistical Commission in 1991, in case they were necessary for completing the revision process; it was now considered likely that both meetings would be necessary;

(g) Extrabudgetary resources had been secured by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat permitting a consultant to be engaged to prepare a Handbook on Environmental Accounting, which would be issued as part of the series of Handbooks on National Accounting;

(h) In June 1989, the Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC), had stressed the important role that the Handbooks would play in the practical implementation of the revised SNA after its adoption and considered that the Handbooks needed to be available with, or shortly after, the publication of the revised SNA; the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on the SNA would review plans developed by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat for the preparation of the Handbooks and that Office would report on the matter to the Statistical Commission.

5. The Working Group recognized that, in view of the far-reaching importance of the revised SNA, care should be taken not to rush the process so that adequate time would be provided for regional and global views to be taken into account. Indeed, there was now some uncertainty as to whether the documentation that would be available to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-sixth session in February 1991 would be sufficiently well developed and reviewed, and available sufficiently in advance of the session to support adoption of the revised SNA by the Commission at that time. The situation would depend upon the work to be completed between now and the Commission session and the views of the regional commissions which would review the draft during 1990. The Working Group considered that appropriate attention should be paid to environmental accounting and that this would involve including a consideration of environmental accounting within the

revised SNA and a more detailed exposition of it in the planned Handbook on Environmental Accounting. In this connection, the Working Group was informed that the World Bank, as part of its research programme, would be carrying out national case-studies in this area. The Working Group agreed that the revised SNA should include coverage of questions of a general nature on the integration of SNA and MPS and noted that the scope of the coverage would in part be determined by the meeting of the Expert Group in December 1989 (see para. 4 (c) and (d) above).

6. The Working Group agreed that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat should delay the completion of the Comparisons of the System of National Accounts and the System of Balances of the National Economy: Conceptual Relationships until after the completion of the revised SNA and also emphasized that high priority should be assigned to completion of the Handbooks on National Accounting.

III. INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON PROGRAMME (ICP)

7. The Working Group considered the matter on the basis of an oral report from the Director of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat of the discussions and conclusions of the meeting of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on the ICP held in New York on 10 and 11 July 1989. The Working Group was informed that:

(a) Phase V of the International Comparison Programme, with 1985 as reference year, was nearing completion; regional comparisons had been completed for the European Economic Community (EEC), OECD, the European Comparison, Africa and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region; the results for the Caribbean region were not available and the interregional links (core comparisons) were not yet final;

(b) The results of the regional comparisons had, in general, improved except for the absence of a Latin American regional comparison in phase V; the greatest weakness of the phase V world comparison was the low number of interregional (core) comparisons, which meant that the results of comparisons between countries belonging to different regions had to be treated with caution; however, some studies were being carried out by EEC that might permit at least some indication to be obtained of the magnitude of uncertainty introduced by this factor;

(c) Regional comparisons for phase VI, with 1990 as reference year, had already started in EEC, OECD and Eastern Europe; several additional countries with centrally planned economies were participating for the first time;

(d) The Inter-American Development Bank had offered substantial support for an Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) regional comparison, although it was not yet known what form that comparison would take since to date only five ECLAC countries had expressed interest in participating in this exercise; Japan was considering providing some support for the ESCAP comparisons and EEC for the African comparisons; however, details of the

arrangements had not been formulated yet; the most critical problem for phase VI was the lack of resources to carry out appropriately the interregional linking;

(e) Various ways of overcoming the reluctance of some countries to serve as core comparators were also considered; one of the possibilities was to replace the core country method by a core product method; in this latter case each region would be asked to price not only the regional specifications but also a given number of "core" specifications; however, any method of linkage would require additional resources which, for the time being, had not been offered by any sponsor; it was not possible, therefore, to make a formal commitment at this stage for organizing the phase VI exercise as a world comparison; however, efforts were continuing to obtain additional resources;

(f) With regard to future activity of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat on the ICP, a Handbook on the ICP would be produced jointly with EEC, efforts on global monitoring of regional work on ICP would continue, support to developing country regional comparisons would also continue and efforts at the promotion of global co-ordination and dissemination would be maintained.

8. The Working Group took note of the report on ICP and in particular the resource problem for supporting global comparisons. In this connection, the Working Group considered that the "product approach", while interesting, should not be considered as an alternative to core country comparisons but as a supplementary approach to core country comparisons and the regional approach.

IV. PROVISIONAL AGENDA AND DOCUMENTATION FOR THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION

9. The Working Group endorsed the provisional agenda that had been approved by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session and by the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1989 by its decision 1989/115. The Working Group also made the following additions:

(a) It added a sub-item 9 (b), Civil registration and vital statistics, in response to expressions of interest from a large number of Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations;

(b) It added a sub-item 9 (f), Human settlements statistics, in response to resolution 12/6 entitled "Compendium on human settlements statistics", adopted by the Commission on Human Settlements at its twelfth session;

(c) It added a sub-item 11 (d), Co-ordination issues related to the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP), the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) project and the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS), reflecting the concern that the Statistical Commission had expressed on this matter at its twenty-fifth session.

10. In line with previous practice, the Working Group discussed the documentation that had been prepared for the twenty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission.

The Working Group considered that the quality of the documents had been very high. However, the Working Group recalled that some of the documents had not been made available on a sufficiently timely basis and this made it difficult for Commission members to prepare well for the session. The Working Group reiterated the emphasis that the Commission had placed on having all the documents available in all the languages well in advance of the twenty-sixth session. That was considered especially important for the documentation under items 4, National accounts and balances, 12, Co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes and 13, Programme questions, in order to allow representatives adequate time for preparation. 1/

11. The Working Group approved the outlines and descriptive notes of the documents for each agenda item, as set out in a restricted document entitled "Proposals and outlines for documentation for the twenty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission" and as provided orally, with the additions, changes and comments set out below. The agreed chapter headings are set out in the following paragraphs.

Agenda item 3. Special issues

Agenda item 3 (a). Increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services

Document: Report on increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. USER AWARENESS AND USE OF STATISTICS

II. SELECTED NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE: PROBLEMS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

III. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING USER AWARENESS

IV. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

12. The Working Group noted that this document would be based on a survey of national experience and would serve as a vehicle for disseminating that experience for the benefit of all national and international statistical services.

Agenda item 3 (b). Implications of structural adjustment and the debt crisis for national statistical services and international statistical work and statistical needs related to the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade

13. The Working Group agreed that the title for this document should be shortened as follows: "Effects of structural adjustment programmes and debt burden on the work programmes of national and international statistical services".

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND DEBT CRISIS

II. INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE FOURTH UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT DECADE

III. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

14. The Working Group noted that the basic objective of this document was to make national and international statistical services aware of overall developments in structural adjustment and the debt crisis and in the fourth United Nations development decade and the implications for these services. The Working Group also noted that the report would be prepared by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat with inputs from the regional commissions, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other organizations.

15. The Working Group considered that the introduction should cover a number of general questions on structural adjustment and the debt crisis and the nature of foreign debt to give a basic understanding of the problem and its magnitude. The Working Group noted and understood that this would be based on existing analytical studies and reports. Chapter I should stress the impact on national statistical offices and international statistical offices of structural adjustment and the debt crisis in terms of the short-term and long-term curtailment of ongoing and planned statistical programmes, as well as data needs and other requirements such as technological and programmatic needs, generated by the situation. Thus it was stressed that chapter I should cover both the positive and the negative impacts of structural adjustment. It should also include coverage of the implications for economic and financial statistics. Chapter II should address the needed data and data systems for monitoring and evaluating the development strategy. It should be broad, to cover not only elements of the development strategy related to economic growth alone, but also to cover the human development aspects. As in chapter I, it should include the impacts on the national statistical offices and international statistical services, as well as the data needs resulting from the strategy. It should review survey strategy, methodology and survey instruments proposed in the context of the United Nations development decade initiatives measured against those that evolved to monitor the impact of structural adjustment and debt crisis.

16. The Working Group noted that the document would not cover surveys alone but the full range of data collection methods and the full range of subjects. The analysis would draw on the experience of experts from the regional commissions and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat relating to countries with which they are familiar, rather than on a systematic analysis of country experiences. The Working Group considered that the document should focus on general considerations rather than on issues at the detailed level. It should also address the importance of understanding user needs and providing the data that can help the policy maker. The Working Group requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to ensure appropriate cross-referencing to the document under agenda item 3 (a), Increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services, and documents under other agenda items. The Working Group welcomed the possibility that this document could be supplemented by background papers from the World Bank and IMF on their programmes in debt statistics.

Agenda item 4. National accounts and balances

Agenda item 4 (a). System of National Accounts (SNA)

17. The Working Group recalled its discussion of the revision of SNA, as set out in paragraphs 4 to 6 above.

First document: Report on progress made in the review of the System of National Accounts (SNA)

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. WORK PROGRAMME OF THE SNA REVIEW

II. OVERVIEW OF CONCEPTUAL CHANGES IN THE REVISED SNA

III. HANDBOOKS OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTING

IV. PROPOSED PROGRAMME FOR SNA IMPLEMENTATION

V. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

18. The Working Group noted that this document was intended to serve, inter alia, as a covering note for the "Draft of the revised System of National Accounts" (see eighth document below). The Working Group also noted that this item would include the development of environmental satellite accounts, which would be described in the document entitled "Report on progress made in the development of environment statistics and future plans" listed under agenda item 9 (e), Environment statistics.

19. The Working Group requested that chapters II or IV include an evaluation of the extent to which the stated objectives of the revision of SNA have been met. The Working Group understood that such an assessment would be preliminary and that the Secretariat looked to the Statistical Commission itself and others to do an

overall evaluation. Chapter IV should include an assessment of the assistance that countries would need to implement the revised SNA. This should cover such elements as training, fellowships, technical advisory services and software and should include a broad statement of resources needed, if possible. This assessment would be based, in part, on information to be included in the reports of the regional commission expert groups (see paras. 21-23 below).

20. The Working Group also requested that the document report on consultations with users on the draft of the revised SNA. The Working Group noted that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat was proceeding on the basis that the primary responsibility for consulting with users was with the national statistical offices and in fact many national experts had already carried out such consultations. The international statistical services were also consulting with users in their organizations and with other user groups and individuals. In addition, such non-governmental organizations as the International Association for Research on Income and Wealth, whose membership comprised both users and producers of national accounts, had given substantial attention to the SNA review at each stage. Accordingly, the Working Group requested that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat stress in its communications with national and international statistical offices the importance of their consulting with users and reflecting those consultations in their inputs to the regional expert meetings (see paras. 21-23 below).

Second through sixth documents:

Report of the Working Party of the Conference of European Statisticians on the System of National Accounts

Report of the Economic Commission for Africa Expert Group Meeting on the System of National Accounts

Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Expert Group Meeting on the System of National Accounts

Report of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Expert Group Meeting on the System of National Accounts

Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Expert Group Meeting on the System of National Accounts

21. The Working Group agreed that consideration of the results of the regional meetings by the Statistical Commission would be facilitated if the reports to the Commission were to have a standardized structure. The Working Group agreed that a useful structure would be one in which the first part of the report would be structured according to the wishes of each regional meeting, reflecting the discussion at the meeting, and the second part would have a standard structure, with the following section headings:

A. General conclusions on the draft of the revised SNA

B. Conclusions on main changes proposed in the draft of the revised SNA

C. Conclusions on topics of special concern to the region

D. Conclusions regarding the implementation of the SNA

E. Other conclusions and proposals

22. It was understood that section D would cover assistance needed by countries to ensure efficient and effective implementation of the revised SNA. The Working Group recalled its conclusion set out in paragraph 20 above that participants at the regional meetings should reflect their consultations with users in their inputs to these regional meetings.

23. Many members of the Working Group expressed the need to have an overall summary of the conclusions of the regional meetings available for the Statistical Commission to help in its review. While recognizing that a formal document was not possible, the Working Group requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to provide an informal report containing, as far as possible, a summary of the conclusions. This report would be supplemented by a substantial oral report to the Commission containing a synthesis of those conclusions.

Seventh document: Report of the meeting of the Expert Group on the Reconciliation of SNA/MPS Standards on National Accounting and Related Activities

24. The Working Group noted that the meeting, to be held in Moscow from 4 to 9 December 1989, would bring together experts in national accounting from countries with centrally planned economies and market economies and would include participants from developed and developing countries. The Working Group amended the title of the report to that shown above to reflect the current title of the expert group.

Eighth document: Draft of the revised System of National Accounts

25. The Working Group noted that, subject to further consultations by the Expert Group on SNA Co-ordination, the planned chapters and annexes of the draft were as follows:

CHAPTERS

I. INTRODUCTION

II. OVERVIEW OF THE SYSTEM

III. INSTITUTIONAL UNITS AND RESIDENCE

IV. SECTORS AND SUBSECTORS OF THE SYSTEM

V. PRODUCTION ACCOUNTS

VI. FINAL EXPENDITURES

VII. PRODUCTION ACCOUNTS BY INDUSTRY AND THE INPUT-OUTPUT TABLES

VIII. TAXES AND OTHER TRANSFERS

IX. FACTOR INCOMES AND PROPERTY INCOMES

X. CAPITAL AND FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

XI. BALANCE SHEETS AND NET WORTH

XII. PRICE AND VOLUME CHANGES

XIII. SATELLITE ACCOUNTS AND ADAPTATION OF THE INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK TO VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES AND NEEDS

XIV. ACCOUNTING RULES

ANNEXES

I. SNA MATRIX

II. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SNA AND RELATED SYSTEMS OF STATISTICS: BALANCE OF PAYMENTS, GOVERNMENT FINANCE STATISTICS, MONEY AND BANKING STATISTICS AND THE SYSTEM OF BALANCES OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

III. TABLE SHOWING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRESENT AND REVISED SNA

IV. POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT

V. CHANGE IN STOCKS AND HOLDING GAINS

VI. LEASING OF EQUIPMENT AND RENTING OF BUILDINGS

26. The Working Group considered that it was essential that the draft of the revised SNA be available well in advance of the Statistical Commission session and in all the official languages of the Commission.

Agenda item 4 (b). System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)

Document: Report on any elaboration of MPS considered by the expert group meeting convened by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) in 1989

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. PROGRESS IN THE WORK ON THE ELABORATION OF MPS

II. STUDY OF NATIONAL PRACTICES IN THE COMPILATION OF MATERIAL BALANCES

III. PROPOSED FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORK

IV. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

27. The Working Group noted that this document would be prepared by CMEA, which had provided the above outline.

Agenda item 4 (c). Links between the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)

Document: Report on the progress made in the harmonization of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. PROGRESS TOWARDS INTEGRATION OF SNA AND MPS

II. REVISION OF THE COMPARISONS OF THE SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS AND THE SYSTEM OF BALANCES OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY, PART ONE, CONCEPTUAL RELATIONSHIPS

III. PROPOSED FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORK

IV. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

28. The Working Group noted that this document would draw on the conclusions of the meeting of the Expert Group on the Reconciliation of SNA/MPS Standards on National Accounting and Related Activities and would report on progress subsequent to that meeting. The Working Group decided that the report of that Expert Group should be listed under items 4 (a), System of National Accounts (SNA) and 4 (c), Links between the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS) in the Commission's agenda. The Working Group recalled its earlier decision that the publication referred to in chapter II of the outline above would be delayed as work could be completed on it only after the revision of SNA had been completed (see para. 6 above).

Agenda item 5. International economic classifications

Document: Report on the progress of work on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE)

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. INFORMAL WORKING GROUPS ON THE INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF STATUS IN EMPLOYMENT (ICSE)

A. Uses of the classification of status in employment

B. Problems in applying existing classifications

II. NATIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS OF STATUS IN EMPLOYMENT: DETAILED ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A. Concepts and structures of classifications

B. Diverse economic conditions and classification needs

III. FUTURE WORK

IV. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

29. The Working Group noted that this document would be prepared by the International Labour Office, which had provided the above outline. The Working Group agreed that it would be useful to include in the report the longer-term work programme leading to consideration of the draft classification by both the Statistical Commission and the International Conference of Labour Statisticians. The Working Group requested that the document, in addition to presenting information on national practices, discuss some of the major substantive issues involved in the revision and provide an indication of some of the characteristics that the revision may have, including presenting provisional proposals so that the Commission's guidance could be obtained at an early stage of developing proposals for a revised classification.

Agenda item 6. Service statistics

First document: Report on the work done by national and international agencies in the field of service statistics.

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. PROGRESS IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICS OF TRADE IN SERVICES

II. PROGRESS IN THE FIELD OF QUANTITY AND PRICE INDICES OF SERVICES

III. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN SERVICE STATISTICS

IV. PROPOSED FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORK

V. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

30. The Working Group requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to contact the regional commissions for information on their relevant activities to include in chapter I and agreed that chapter III could report on developments, if any, on international agreement on a uniform definition of the concept of services.

Second document: Report on a substantive topic prepared by the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics

31. The Working Group noted that the Voorburg Group would meet in Ottawa from 2 to 5 October 1989 and would consider, inter alia, the topic to be selected for this document. The Working Group emphasized that the document should be a report on a substantive topic.

Agenda item 7. Price statistics

Document: Report on developments in phase VI of the International Comparison Programme (ICP) and on other related international comparison issues

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. FINALIZATION OF THE PHASE V (1985) COMPARISON

II. PROGRESS IN THE PHASE VI (1990) COMPARISON

III. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS OF ICP

V. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

32. The Working Group recalled its discussion of the ICP as set out in paragraphs 7 and 8 above. The Working Group requested that chapters I and II include a review of the experience of organizations and other users in using ICP results and noted that the World Bank would provide information on its experiences. The Working Group agreed that the points for discussion should include, inter alia, (a) the question of integrating ICP into the regular national statistical programme of a country and linking it with SNA; this was seen as one mechanism for enhancing the interest of national statistical offices in participating in the Programme; and (b) the relationship between ICP and other work on price statistics at the international level. The Working Group was of the view that the Commission should take note under this item of the work on prices reported

in the documents on SNA and service statistics and that, following discussion at the twenty-sixth session, the Commission might wish to consider price statistics more broadly at a future session.

Agenda item 8. Industrial statistics

Document: Report on the effectiveness of the 1983 World Programme of Industrial Statistics

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. REVIEW OF THE 1983 WORLD PROGRAMME IN THE CONTEXT OF ITS PURPOSES

A. Outcome of the 1983 Programme as compared to the 1973 Programme

B. Effectiveness of the 1983 Programme in encouraging bench-mark enumerations

C. Impact of training workshops

II. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NEXT WORLD PROGRAMME

III. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

33. The Working Group welcomed information given by the Director of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat on preliminary considerations for the next World Programme of Industrial Statistics and noted that these would be circulated to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the regional commissions and other organizations for comment in the near future. These considerations covered such matters as (a) fixed year or fixed periodicity for the Programme; (b) the adequacy of existing recommendations and the possible need for supplementary recommendations and other technical documentation, including software, for such matters as the implementation of the revised International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), the construction of index numbers of industrial production, treatment of household and small-scale industries, the possible expansion of the scope of bench-mark collection efforts to include services, as well as the production activities traditionally covered; and (c) technical co-operation needs. The Working Group requested that these and other relevant considerations, including the relationship between bench-mark data collection provided by the Programme and current collection of industrial statistics, be reflected in chapter II.

Agenda item 9. Demographic, social and environment statistics

Agenda item 9 (a). Population and housing censuses

34. In view of its decision to have a separate document on agenda item 9 (b) (see para. 36 below) and the stage reached in the 1985-1994 census decade, the Working Group decided that a separate document should not be prepared on population and

housing censuses but that the subject should be treated in a separate chapter in the document listed under agenda item 10, Development and integration of methodological work. That chapter should have the outline as proposed in the restricted document and which is set out below.

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION

A. Activities at the global level

B. Activities at the regional level

C. Activities at the national level

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF CENSUS DATA BASES FOR 1990 CENSUSES

A. Methodological developments

B. Scope and topics of data bases

III. TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION NEEDS AND ACTIVITIES

A. Training needs for post-censal evaluation

B. Other technical co-operation needs for the 1990 censuses

IV. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

35. The Working Group emphasized that this decision on documentation should not be perceived as reflecting any reduction in the priority attached to this important subject and that the subject should be treated at appropriate length in the document.

Agenda item 9 (b). Civil registration and vital statistics

Document: Progress report on civil registration and vital statistics

36. In view of the wide interest expressed in this subject by Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations and because it had not been considered by the Statistical Commission since 1981, the Working Group decided that a separate report should be prepared for this item, rather than including the subject as a chapter in the document under agenda item 10, Development and integration of methodological work, where it might otherwise have been placed.

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. PROGRESS IN CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SINCE 1981

II. ISSUES IN AND EMERGING ADVANCES CONDUCIVE TO IMPROVING VITAL STATISTICS

A. Issues in improving vital statistics

B. Advances in data processing technology and dissemination

III. TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION NEEDS AND ACTIVITIES

A. Training and other needs

B. International programme to accelerate the improvement of vital statistics

IV. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

37. The Working Group noted that this report would be prepared by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in collaboration with UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WHO and with help from the International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics (IIVRS). The Working Group agreed that chapter II, section A, should include a consideration of the need for, value of and uses of statistics from civil registration, especially for developing countries, and also some of the administrative uses of civil registration.

Agenda item 9 (c). Social statistics and indicators

38. The Working Group decided to eliminate the first document originally requested under this item, namely, "Report on co-ordination of statistical programmes for social indicators" and to incorporate the subject of that document, as appropriate, in the second document requested, namely, "Report on progress made in the development of a co-ordinated United Nations system data base for selected social statistics and indicators of common interest at the national and international levels", which is outlined below and in reports called for under agenda item 10, Development and integration of methodological work, and agenda item 12, Co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes.

39. The Working Group amended the proposed title to read as follows: "Report on progress made in the development of a co-ordinated United Nations system data base for selected social statistics and indicators of common interest and the development of related national data bases".

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION: THE CONCEPT OF AN INTERNATIONAL DATA BASE IN SOCIAL STATISTICS

I. EVALUATION OF COMMON SOCIAL STATISTICS REQUIREMENTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

A. Programme monitoring

B. Development objectives

C. Technical co-operation and development assistance

D. International strategies and events

II. CURRENT INTERNATIONAL COMPILATION AND CO-ORDINATION ARRANGEMENTS

III. TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR COMPILATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

IV. METHODS TO IDENTIFY SERIES TO BE INCLUDED AND HARMONIZATION OF REQUIRED CLASSIFICATIONS

A. Population and families, health, education and culture

B. Labour force, income, consumption, investment and poverty

C. Series concerning children, women, disabled persons, the elderly and other special population groups

D. Other social series

E. Other related economic and environment series

V. CONCLUSIONS

VI. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

40. The Working Group agreed that the document should address the set of activities needed for the establishment and compilation of data bases at the national level, in addition to those needed to develop the proposed international data base. It emphasized that in both the national and the international situation the data base must be relevant to needs, including policy needs, and capable of reflecting significant changes in social conditions. With regard to the United Nations system data base the Working Group agreed that the emphasis should be on including in the data base, series on internationally agreed on quantitative goals and targets so as to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of national and international social and other development efforts. The Working Group also noted that the proposed international data base was a limited one and that individual agencies would have much more extensive data bases in their own area of concern.

The Working Group also stressed the importance of co-ordination between the proposed United Nations system data base and the individual data bases of each agency. The Working Group considered that there may be additional concerns at the national level compared to the international level, for example, the need for sub-national data and a greater level of detail.

41. The Working Group recommended that the paper should try to describe what was required to meet the specific needs in the national and international situations. This should encompass operational, technical and conceptual aspects, the selection of indicators from various sectors and their organization into a coherent whole, and the identification of the necessary co-ordination at the national and international levels. The document should also emphasize the need to provide assistance at the national level in the organization and development of the needed statistics. The point was made that developing countries would need operational manuals to help them with the development and maintenance of data bases, particularly a manual presenting clear guidance on the selection of indicators for a general-purpose data base for use in the overall monitoring of social goals and the fourth United Nations development decade.

42. The Working Group agreed that the introduction should place the data base effort into the context of other programmes of social statistics. This aspect would also be an important part of chapter II. The Working Group noted that since this document dealt with monitoring and evaluating the human condition, it would have considerable interrelationship with the document under agenda item 3 (b). Moreover, it agreed that co-ordination issues related to the use of household surveys to generate the needed data would be discussed under agenda item 11 (d), Co-ordination issues related to the National Household Survey Capability Programme, the Social Dimensions of Adjustment project and the Living Standards Measurement Study. The Working Group recognized that the outline might need to be changed by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to allow it to reflect the requested amendments to the document to cover national data bases, as well as the international data base.

43. The representative of the World Bank requested that the document deal with the reservations that had been expressed by the World Bank at the twenty-third session of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, held at Geneva from 19 to 23 June 1989, under the agenda item entitled "Monitoring achievement of social goals in the 1990s". Those reservations concerned various aspects of the data compilation and development activities that were expected to be a part of the programme described in the document (see ACC/1989/PG/6, paras. 57-62).

Agenda item 9 (d). Patterns of consumption: qualitative aspects of development

Document: Final report on the case-studies carried out by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on qualitative aspects of development and on the results of the planned international statistical meeting on the subject

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. BACKGROUND

II. SUMMARY RESULTS OF COUNTRY CASE-STUDIES

India

Kenya

Morocco

III. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS FROM COUNTRY CASE-STUDIES

IV. RESULTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL MEETING IN MOROCCO ON PATTERNS OF CONSUMPTION

V. CO-ORDINATION WITH RELATED NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES

VI. FUTURE WORK

VII. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

44. The Working Group noted that this document would be prepared by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. The Working Group also noted that, although this document responded appropriately to a specific request from the Statistical Commission 2/ and to resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council (resolution 1987/6 of 26 May 1987) and the General Assembly (resolution 40/179 of 17 December 1985), the discussion at the twenty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission had been broader. 3/ UNRISD considered that its programme could be broadened in the future. The Working Group emphasized the relationship between this project and other statistical programmes. This would be covered in chapter V and would involve cross-referencing to other documents for the Commission and in particular the document under agenda item 9 (c), Social statistics and indicators. The Working Group welcomed the information that the international meeting on the subject was tentatively planned for May 1990, with the Government of Morocco acting as host, and would be preceded by a technical meeting of international organizations and others in December 1989. The Working Group also welcomed information on the new UNRISD project on estimates of socio-economic data in current international use.

Agenda item 9 (e). Environment statistics

First document: Report on methods of environment statistics developed under the work programme of the Conference of European Statisticians

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

II. DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARD CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS

III. METHODOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS

IV. DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL DATA SERVICE

V. PERSPECTIVES FOR FUTURE WORK

45. The Working Group noted that this document would be prepared by the Economic Commission for Europe, which had provided the above outline. The Working Group requested ECE to give special attention to chapters II and III of the outline. In this connection, it requested ECE to provide descriptions of the various relevant classifications and other aspects of methodology that had been adopted by the Conference of European Statisticians and, wherever feasible, also include the classifications themselves in the body of the paper or as an annex. The Working Group also requested ECE to include information on experiences to date on the use of those classifications and other aspects of methodology, with a view to assisting the Commission in identifying one or more classifications or other methodological outputs of the Conference of European Statisticians that may be particularly appropriate for international adaptation and use. The Working Group considered that presentation of the report in this way, with appropriate points for discussion, would help the Statistical Commission assess the relevance of the ECE work as a basis for developing classifications and other aspects of methodology at the world level in this field.

Second document: Report on progress made in the development of environment statistics and future plans

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. METHODOLOGICAL WORK

II. CO-OPERATION AND CO-ORDINATION

III. COMPILATION AND DISSEMINATION OF ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

IV. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK

V. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

46. The Working Group welcomed the steps taken by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat towards, and the positive responses from, countries for establishing a "Voorburg type" group for environment statistics along the lines suggested by the Statistical Commission and consistent with the requirements set by the Commission, which called for any such endeavour to preserve the co-ordinating role of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and provide for participation by developing countries. 4/ It also welcomed the joint project of the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat on environmental accounting. The Working Group recalled its discussion of the relevance of this latter project to agenda item 4 (a), System of National Accounts. The Working Group agreed that this document should be broad in its coverage to include the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, other international organizations and selected non-governmental organizations and to include illustrative developments at the national level. With regard to non-governmental organizations, specific reference was made to the work of the World Resources Institute and the International Association of Official Statisticians. The Working Group also agreed that the points for discussion should include a consideration of the compilation of environmental statistics at the global level.

Agenda item 9 (f). Human settlements statistics

47. The Working Group decided that the documentation for this item should be provided in chapter II, section E, of the planned report under agenda item 10, Development and integration of methodological work. That section, entitled "Housing and human settlements statistics", would review the current methodological work and the future direction of the work in the light of the mandated reduction in resources in the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, taking account of the views expressed by the Commission on Human Settlements at its twelfth session (see resolution 12/6). The Working Group welcomed the ongoing consultations between the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) concerning various alternatives for co-operative efforts aimed at continuing compilation and dissemination of human settlements statistics, although the Working Group recognized the possibility that data collected in the immediate future might not be as detailed as previously.

Agenda item 10. Development and integration of methodological work

Document: Report on the general development and integration of methodological work, including experience and progress made in international classifications

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. SUMMARY REVIEW OF METHODOLOGICAL WORK

II. ONGOING AND FUTURE WORK IN SELECTED AREAS

A. International classifications

B. Energy statistics

C. International trade and transport statistics

D. Population and housing censuses

E. Housing and human settlements statistics

F. Statistical programmes for social indicators

III. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

48. The Working Group considered that this document served well the purpose of keeping the Commission informed of developments in methodological work in certain fields which were important but which did not call for separate documents at this time.

Agenda item 11. Technical co-operation

Agenda item 11 (a). Technical co-operation in statistics

Document: Report on technical co-operation in statistics

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION PROGRAMMES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

II. OTHER MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION PROGRAMMES

III. ISSUES IN STATISTICAL TRAINING

IV. ISSUES IN STATISTICAL DATA PROCESSING AND INFORMATICS

V. PRIORITIES

VI. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

49. The Working Group decided that the information in chapters I and II describing technical co-operation activities should be presented in as concise and abbreviated a manner as possible and more detailed descriptions should be included in the Directory of Technical Co-operation. Chapters III and IV should contain descriptions of problems and issues, rather than simply a description of activities. The Working Group recognized the increasing importance of training in administration and management of national statistics services and asked that this be covered in chapter III. This chapter should also include aspects of technical co-operation among developing countries, should consider the necessary mutually supportive relationships between training at the global, regional and country levels, the need to train statisticians to develop and maintain close links with users and the need for horizontal co-operation at the national level. The Working Group also noted the joint project of ECE and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on statistical computing and requested that it be referred to in chapter IV.

50. The Working Group decided that a new chapter V should be introduced on priorities for statistical development. The chapter on priorities should: (a) discuss priorities, in so far as possible, in terms of those established by the recipient countries, the multilateral and bilateral donor agencies and various international programmes with technical co-operation components, (b) include cross-references to other documents for the Statistical Commission that set out some aspects of future plans, emerging needs and problems, as this would give the paper a more forward-looking approach and (c) address the need to enhance the quality of data and the analytical use of statistics. The Working Group noted that improving the quality of data and analysis should also be important objectives of training programmes in every field of statistics. To facilitate the discussion on priorities, the Working Group requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to include a question on priorities in the request for contributions sent to organizations and countries in connection with the preparation of the document. The Working Group also requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to examine the feasibility of having a single, consolidated request for information on technical co-operation activities to serve the needs of the present document and the Directory of Technical Co-operation. In addition, the Working Group noted that several agencies had carried out specific studies of country needs and capabilities in the field of statistics, for example the recent joint study of Africa by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), UNDP and the World Bank and the basic needs assessments carried out by UNFPA. These may be drawn on in the discussion of country priorities along with the views of the regional commissions.

51. The Working Group decided that the points for discussion should include questions on co-ordination of technical co-operation, particularly at the national level, priorities and documentation that might be needed as a basis for further discussion by the Commission at a future session. The Working Group considered that focusing discussion on these aspects at the twenty-sixth session would help identify directions for future discussion. The Working Group considered that, as in the past, the regional commissions would be a rich source of relevant information for all aspects of this report.

52. The Working Group decided that the document listed under agenda item 3 (b) should be listed under this agenda item also because of its close relevance. Other documents for the twenty-sixth session of the Commission would also be relevant, and appropriate cross-referencing would need to be made.

Agenda item 11 (b). National Household Survey Capability Programme

Document: Report on the progress of the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP) and its co-ordination with other household survey programmes, including results of available evaluations of NHSCP

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. PROGRESS IN COUNTRY-LEVEL OPERATIONS

II. TECHNICAL STUDIES AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

III. CO-ORDINATION WITH OTHER RELATED PROGRAMMES

IV. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

53. The Working Group agreed that (a) chapter I should include an indication of the developments in NHSCP countries, including progress made and the kinds of further support they may need, especially for countries that have gone into the maintenance phase, in addition to quantitative information on the number of countries participating in NHSCP, and (b) chapter III should include co-ordination with other household survey programmes in addition to the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) project and the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) of the World Bank, as well as with other statistical activities, such as the population and housing census, efforts aimed at establishing national and international data banks and monitoring social goals in the 1990s and the collection of data on household and small-scale industries. The Working Group decided to consider chapter III under agenda item 11 (d), Co-ordination issues related to the National Household Survey Capability Programme, the Social Dimensions of Adjustment project and the Living Standards Measurement Study.

Agenda item 11 (c). World Bank household survey initiatives

Document: Report on the progress of the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) and the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) project, including fuller details of the survey methodology proposed for the SDA project and the results of available evaluations of these initiatives

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. LIVING STANDARDS MEASUREMENT STUDY

II. SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF ADJUSTMENT PROJECT

III. CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN THE WORLD BANK AND OTHER AGENCIES

IV. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

54. The Working Group noted that this document would be prepared by the World Bank, which had provided the above outline. The Working Group requested the World Bank to provide as full a description of methodologies as possible in chapters I and II consistent with the 24-page limit on the document and welcomed the intention of the Bank to make available to the Commission draft questionnaires and manuals as background documents. Special interest was expressed in the methodologies and questionnaires being developed for both the intensive and extensive surveys and it was considered important that the Statistical Commission be provided with enough information on these to clarify their content, scope, background and purposes. The Working Group also agreed that chapter III should include co-ordination with other household survey programmes in addition to NHSCP, as well as other aspects of co-ordination. The Working Group decided to consider chapter III under agenda item 11 (d), Co-ordination issues related to the National Household Survey Capability Programme, the Social Dimensions of Adjustment project and the Living Standards Measurement Study.

Agenda item 11 (d). Co-ordination issues related to the National Household Survey Capability Programme, the Social Dimensions of Adjustment project and the Living Standards Measurement Study

55. The Working Group decided that the documentation for this item should be chapter III of the document on NHSCP (agenda item 11 (b)) and chapter III of the document on the World Bank household survey initiatives (agenda item 11 (c)). It was understood that an important part of the co-ordination discussion would be the co-ordination between NHSCP and the SDA project and LSMS, and the annotations to the agenda should reflect this. Furthermore, the Working Group considered that this item would include co-ordination with other programmes that had household survey components, especially the relevant elements of the programme considered under agenda item 9 (c), Social statistics and indicators, and this should also be reflected in the annotations to the agenda for the Statistical Commission. Finally, it was recognized that NHSCP, SDA and LSMS each had separate sets of co-ordination issues in terms of their involvement with other, non-survey activities and these co-ordination issues should also be referred to in the annotated agenda. Such an approach was considered responsive to the concern of the Statistical Commission for co-ordination among programmes aimed at primary data collection. 5/ In this connection, the Working Group was pleased to hear of the discussions that had been taking place involving the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank on survey initiatives and the specific progress being made on co-ordination between NHSCP, SDA and LSMS, including joint country missions.

Agenda item 12. Co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes

First document: Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination on its thirteenth session

56. The Working Group noted that this report would be in accordance with the agenda and discussions of the Working Group's session.

Second document: Report on the statistical work of international organizations

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. FOR EACH ORGANIZATION

A. Major achievements, including new activities

B. Activities discontinued

C. Activities modified significantly

II. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

57. The Working Group noted that this report would also be considered under agenda item 13 (a), Programme performance and implementation.

Third document: Report on the plans of international organizations in the field of statistics

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. FOR EACH ORGANIZATION

A. New activities

B. Major changes

II. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

58. The Working Group noted that this report would also be considered under agenda item 13 (b), Programme objectives and planning.

59. The Working Group noted that for the second and third documents above, when they are considered under agenda item 12, the focus is intended to be on co-ordination aspects and when considered under items 13 (a) and 13 (b), the focus is intended to be more on the substance of the programmes.

60. The Working Group recalled that at the twenty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission it was agreed that future reporting to the Commission on the medium-term plans of international organizations in the field of statistics should be scheduled to coincide with the preparation of medium-term plans by the organizations. 6/ However, the Working Group noted that at present and for a variety of reasons there is no uniform plan period among the agencies, but that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination was currently studying the harmonization of planning periods with a view to making recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly in 1990. However, complete uniformity among all the organizations was not considered likely. In the mean time the Working Group decided that the document should report exclusively on new additions to and major changes in existing plans.

61. The Working Group recalled the Commission's discussion at its twenty-fifth session concerning arrangements for statistical compilation in the international organizations. 7/ The Working Group considered that a useful initial response to that discussion would be the assessment of the availability of any spare capacity in the organizations for this purpose.

Agenda item 13. Programme questions

Agenda item 13 (a). Programme performance and implementation

First document: Report on the statistical work of international organizations

62. The Working Group noted that this document was outlined under agenda item 12 above.

Second document: Updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN AREAS COVERED BY THE AGENDA

II. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN AREAS NOT COVERED BY THE AGENDA

III. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

63. The Working Group noted the continuing value of this document for reporting on important developments on an up-to-date basis subsequent to the issuance of the other documents on the agenda and for reporting important developments in topical subjects not included on the agenda.

Agenda item 13 (b). Programme objectives and planning

First document: Draft work programme of the Statistical Office for 1992-1993, including relevant information on the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997

Chapter headings:

INTRODUCTION

I. CONTENTS OF THE CONFERENCE ROOM PAPER ON THE PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME OF THE STATISTICAL OFFICE FOR 1992-1993

II. CONTENTS OF THE CONFERENCE ROOM PAPER ON THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN OF THE STATISTICAL OFFICE FOR THE PERIOD 1992-1997

III. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

64. The Working Group noted that this document was intended to serve, inter alia, as a covering note for two conference room papers, one containing the proposed work programme for 1992-1993 and one containing information on the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, the chapter headings for which are set out below.

Conference room paper: Proposed work programme for 1992-1993

Chapter headings:

I. Proposed work programme of the Statistical Office for 1992-1993

II. Proposals on priorities in the work programme for 1992-1993

III. Comparative information on the number of professional work-months assigned to each programme element for 1990-1991 and 1992-1993

IV. Final approved outputs in the work programme for 1990-1991, the original planned timing, the stage reached in the completion and any revisions to the timing of the outputs

65. The Working Group recalled discussions of priorities and priority setting at previous sessions of the Statistical Commission, 8/ especially the difficulty of setting priorities at the programme element level, and requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to present its proposals on priorities at the output level, if feasible and describe the basis or rationale for the proposed priorities. The Working Group considered that this information would assist greatly the Statistical Commission's discussion of priorities.

Conference room paper: Medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997

Chapter headings:

I. Medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997

II. Ways in which the medium-term plan differs from the preliminary proposals prepared for the Commission at its twenty-fifth session (E/CN.3/1989/CRP.2)

Second document: Report on the plans of international organizations in the field of statistics

66. The Working Group noted that this document was outlined under agenda item 12 above.

Agenda item 14. Draft provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session of the Commission

67. The Working Group noted that, in accordance with rule 9 of the rules of procedure, a draft provisional agenda would be issued in advance of the twenty-sixth session and a revised draft provisional agenda would be presented to the Commission during the twenty-sixth session.

Agenda item 15. Report of the Commission on its twenty-sixth session

68. The Working Group noted that the report of the Commission on its twenty-sixth session would be prepared by the Rapporteur, with the assistance of the Secretariat.

V. GENERAL DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION OF METHODOLOGICAL WORK

69. The Working Group considered the matter on the basis of an oral report from the Director of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat. The oral report summarized written comments that had been received from members of the Statistical Commission on the report of the Secretary-General on general development and integration of methodological work (E/CN.3/1989/15), which was submitted to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session. 9/ That oral report superseded a restricted note that had been issued in June 1989, as additional information had become available after that note had been issued. The Director reported that:

(a) One country suggested that the methodological report be further developed to include current and planned methodological projects of all United Nations organizations for a period of about five years. The country considered that such a plan would enable the Statistical Commission to carry out its steering task efficiently in the field of methodological development and research in statistics;

(b) Comments were made by several countries regarding industrial statistics. One suggestion was for further development of methodological definitions for indicators in the area of machinery and automation statistics and, in particular, the definitions of new industrial areas of a technologically advanced kind. Support was expressed in principle for the several directions of work proposed for industrial statistics in document E/CN.3/1989/15. Another comment related to the collection of industrial statistics by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat from Member States (see para. 77 below);

(c) There was support for the planned further development of statistics of new and renewable sources of energy at the national level even though this field of statistics might not be equally relevant in all countries. One country commented

that the scope of new and renewable sources of energy should be clearly defined. It also indicated that it attached more importance to concentrating the efforts of countries and the interregional organs concerned on the development of an international energy statistical system that was consistent both in the methodological and technical aspects. This would result in reducing the data supply burden on countries and in improved international comparability of data;

(d) Support was expressed for the work outlined in document E/CN.3/1989/15 in the fields of international trade and transport statistics and population and housing censuses, and, in particular, one country suggested that work should be accelerated on drafting volume II of the Commodity Indexes to the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 3, the proposed report on country practices in external trade statistics, and that efforts should be made to expand the country coverage of the unit value indexes of exports of machinery and equipment;

(e) Several countries had described their national practices and experiences in industrial statistics, population and housing censuses, energy statistics, international trade and transport statistics and in long-term planning of methodological work, which the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat had found useful.

70. The Working Group expressed its appreciation to members of the Statistical Commission who had provided comments.

71. The Working Group recognized the need for experimental work on expert systems and considered that this subject could be appropriate for inclusion in the new proposals that were being developed by ECE for the ECE/UNDP Statistical Computing Project. The Working Group considered it would be helpful if the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat could include a description of any ongoing international work on expert systems in particular fields in the various documents for the twenty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission. The Working Group also urged the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the statistical offices of other international organizations to give attention to the development of such expert systems as a part of the ongoing methodological work. In this connection, it emphasized the importance of developing country involvement in any expert groups that might be convened on expert systems, data bases and related subjects. The Working Group noted the positive practice of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in this regard.

72. The Working Group stressed the value of exchange of information on experiences in methodological work among countries, particularly developing countries, and the role that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, along with other international organizations, can play in facilitating that; particular reference was made to experiences in population and housing censuses, application of the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) for international trade statistics, the feasibility of applying ISIC at the four-digit level and experiments with training, including the use of videotapes. The Working Group agreed that more interaction among developing countries, including within the context of technical co-operation among developing countries, would be beneficial,

and emphasized in particular the benefit of featuring relevant expertise from developing countries in training programmes in statistics.

73. The Working Group welcomed a report from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on progress in the ASYCUDA project covering (a) the number of countries that have implemented or expressed interest in the project, (b) technical developments and (c) the training programmes offered. The Working Group welcomed the technical developments in the project aimed at substantially enhancing the system's usefulness and flexibility for providing international trade statistics for a country and for inclusion in international data bases. The Working Group decided to provide an opportunity for a discussion of progress on ASYCUDA at the twenty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission under agenda item 10, Development and integration of methodological work. The Working Group requested that a brief report on ASYCUDA be included in chapter II, section C, of the document under that agenda item and that UNCTAD also provide a more detailed background document on the subject for the Commission. The Working Group also suggested that a demonstration of ASYCUDA at the time of the Commission session would be of interest to many countries.

VI. CO-ORDINATION OF THE STATISTICAL DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

74. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of two restricted notes entitled "Inventory of statistical data collection activities" and "Progress report on co-ordination of statistical data collection activities by non-statistical units of international organizations".

75. The first note contained a summary of the major changes that had occurred in international statistical data collection activities in the past two years and a brief description of the data collected from countries on magnetic tape. With respect to the co-ordination of activities, the note described the exchange of completed questionnaires among the international organizations and the sharing of data in other ways such as exchange of data on computer tapes. It also contained a comprehensive listing that endeavoured to cover all questionnaires dispatched by the statistical services of the international organizations for the collection of statistics from Member States. This listing contained descriptions of current questionnaires, information on dispatch and deadline dates and an indication of the addressees for each questionnaire. The note constituted a revised version of a similar document, which had been discussed by the Working Group at its twelfth session and subsequently circulated to all national statistical offices.

76. The Working Group considered that the information contained in the inventory of statistical data collection activities was extremely valuable for promoting the co-ordination of international statistical work by helping to identify apparent duplication in data collection and to give potential data users a clear picture of the current data collection activities of the international organizations. It also welcomed the improvements that had been made in the report along the lines suggested by the Working Group at its twelfth session, by, as far as possible, including statistical questionnaires, even if the data collected served only a

limited purpose, by making the descriptions of the questionnaires more detailed in covering such things as the classifications used, units of measurement and time period coverage of data requested and by structuring annex II by months of reporting deadlines rather than months of dispatch of the questionnaires by the requesting organizations (see E/CN.3/1989/20, para. 53). However, the Working Group considered that scope still existed for further implementation of these previous suggestions.

77. The Working Group also welcomed the progress that had been made in the co-ordination of data collection activities covered by the inventory. The Working Group stated its concern about the overall burden of data supply on countries but recognized the need to take account of the uses to which the collected data were put in making any overall assessment. The Working Group recalled its discussion of agenda item 6 concerning one country's views on the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat's supplementary questionnaires for industrial statistics and the request for industrial statistics at the four-digit ISIC level (see para. 69 (b) above). That country, while supporting some reasonable revision of the coverage for industrial statistics collected by the United Nations, pointed out that the specific proposals set out in document E/CN.3/1989/15 called for more detail than the country collected, used different nomenclatures than used in the country and requested value data where the national data were in physical terms only. The country indicated that it would be unable to undertake further data collection to meet the requests, except perhaps in the years of industrial censuses. The Working Group noted that the tailoring of questionnaires to conform to the availability of statistics in different countries helped with the response burden and indicated that it would be interested in having information on the extent to which tailoring is done in the various organizations.

78. The Working Group considered that the application of microcomputer technology at the national level offered some prospects of reducing the burden and improving the response time for answering questionnaires. The Working Group noted that some collection of data by international organizations through microcomputers was operational already, including for national accounts and for general economic and social statistics for the United Nations Monthly Bulletin of Statistics. Some additional experiments were under way and the results were promising.

79. The importance of co-ordination at the country level of the responses to international questionnaires was stressed and international organizations were requested to facilitate the role of national statistical services in this by providing to the national statistical office information copies of all questionnaires that are sent to other government departments or, if institutional arrangements permit, by requesting data through the national statistical office.

80. The Working Group was informed of the procedures used in the past to reduce duplication; they involved sending the inventory to countries, receiving comments and observations of apparent duplication from them and following up these comments and observations with the concerned international organizations and reporting to the Working Group and the Statistical Commission. More general issues relating to apparent duplication were also addressed by the ACC Sub-Committee for Statistical Activities. The Working Group requested the Statistical Office of the United

Nations Secretariat to continue the past practice of circulating the inventory to countries.

81. The Working Group considered it important for organizations to publish adequate statements of their methodologies for compiling or adjusting data and making estimates in order for users to understand relationships among various sets of national data that may be made available nationally or internationally.

82. The second note reported on policy initiatives taken by the international organizations and their experiences to date with those initiatives in relation to the co-ordination of statistical data collection activities by non-statistical units of international organizations. The Working Group welcomed the fact that most organizations had instituted procedures for review of the questionnaires sent out by non-statistical units of organizations. In most cases, the procedures introduced in the various organizations generally required that questionnaires and other requests to Member States for statistical data must be cleared by the statistics division or a committee including representation from the statistics division before they are sent to Member States. The Working Group also welcomed the report of several organizations on their experiences in implementing their review procedures. Those organizations had reported reviewing various numbers of requests, but recognized that they could not be certain that compliance had been complete. This process was also helping to improve the questionnaires sent to Member States. The Working Group agreed that the results achieved to date were encouraging. However, the Working Group also took note that when the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities met at Geneva from 19 to 23 June 1989, it expressed satisfaction with the initiatives that had been taken by organizations in this matter and welcomed the reports on experiences to date but also noted that several agencies still had some issues to resolve in developing suitable co-ordination mechanisms.

83. The Working Group noted that requests for data came to countries from a variety of sources and that the co-ordination under consideration by the Working Group related to requests that came from international organizations, including any channelled through official agency focal points in countries. In case of doubt as to whether a request was from an international organization or an individual, the Working Group urged that the national statistical office obtain formal views on the matter from the agency country focal point or the agency itself.

84. In respect of both forms of data collection referred to in paragraphs 75 and 82 above, the Working Group agreed that it would be useful for the Statistical Commission to consider, at its twenty-sixth session, recommending a draft resolution to the Economic and Social Council, in which the Council, while noting progress, would request the international organizations to strengthen the mechanisms for the co-ordination of statistical data collection by statistical divisions and the ad hoc collection by non-statistical units and would ask Member States to bring to the attention of the relevant organizations any instances of apparent duplication or excessive requests. In making this recommendation, the Working Group recalled that, while the Statistical Commission itself had addressed these questions frequently, the Economic and Social Council had not addressed them formally in many years.

VII. IDENTIFICATION OF WAYS TO ACCELERATE STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT WHILE ENSURING CO-ORDINATION IN SELECTED FIELDS OF STATISTICS

85. The Working Group considered the matter on the basis of an oral report from the Director of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat. In the report he outlined (a) areas in which statistical development is required and co-ordination is an important element, (b) initiatives and experiments undertaken in selected fields to promote statistical development and (c) conditions considered essential for initiatives and experiments to be successful. The Director emphasized that in selecting some areas for consideration under this item there was no implication that methodological development and co-ordination were not important in other areas, but rather that these areas had particular problems where the Statistical Commission had identified that additional methodological work was needed and involved co-ordination. The areas covered were the System of National Accounts and the System of Balances of the National Economy, environment statistics, service statistics and data bases and related issues in data processing and informatics. Initiatives that had been taken to encourage needed methodological work were (a) the use of outputs of regional commissions as a basis for global work, (b) the use of global working groups of volunteering countries, (c) temporary assignment of staff by Member States to carry out the work, (d) extrabudgetary financial support and (e) co-operative efforts among international organizations to share the work. The Director reiterated the principles that had been set down by the Statistical Commission for these kinds of initiatives, namely, that the leadership and co-ordinating role of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat should be preserved and that the mechanism should be inclusive to ensure that all interested countries, including, in particular, developing countries, could participate. 10/ The Director indicated that experience to date was mixed, with some successes in some areas and with only limited progress in other efforts.

86. The Working Group expressed its support for the initiatives described as they were contributing to speeding up statistical development, although it recognized that some of the initiatives were new and of an experimental character. The Working Group encouraged the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to continue these attempts to accelerate development and decided that the next Statistical Commission or Working Group session should review the benefits and problems presented by these arrangements and their possible applicability in other areas. It considered that by that time adequate experience would have been accumulated to permit a more substantial evaluation.

87. In the context of statistical development, the Working Group considered the impact that changes in the nature of economic activity, production processes and institutional arrangements and other phenomena have on information requirements and methods of assembling information. It was observed that analysis of the impacts of changes of these kinds required additional or new data and provided an impetus and pressure for methodological development. The Working Group considered that the Statistical Commission might wish to consider this matter as a special topic at its twenty-seventh session. The Working Group also considered that it would be useful if the International Statistical Institute could consider at one of its future

sessions the topic "Changes in the nature of economic activity and how these affect official statistics and statistical methodologies".

VIII. COMPOSITION OF THE WORKING GROUP

88. The matter was discussed on the basis of an oral report from the Director of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat. The Working Group noted the historical development of the composition of the Working Group since it was originally established in May 1968. The initial membership had been established by the Economic and Social Council and consisted of the Chairman and two additional members of the Commission (see Economic and Social Council resolution 1306 (XLIV) of 31 May 1968). At its seventeenth session, in November 1972, the Commission had discussed the composition of the Working Group with particular regard to the statistical requirements of the Second United Nations Development Decade (1970s). The Commission decided that the Working Group should be composed of the members of the Commission's Bureau, that is, the Chairman, the two Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur; the representatives to the Commission of the two major contributors to the budget of the United Nations; and one representative to the Commission from a developing country from among the members of each of the following regional commissions: ESCAP, ECLAC, and ECA, unless they were already represented in the Bureau. 11/ The basic aim here was to ensure representation on the Working Group of representatives from developing countries. At the same time the Commission agreed that if any of the representatives of a developing country were unable to participate in a particular session of the Working Group their places should be taken by alternates (specified by the Statistical Commission). 12/ The composition of the Working Group had been automatically adjusted by the Commission subsequently when three Vice-Chairmen were elected to the Commission and when the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was established, so that currently the Working Group consisted of the officers of the Commission, that is, the Chairman, the three Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur; the representatives to the Commission of the two major contributors to the budget of the United Nations, unless they were already represented in the Bureau; and one representative to the Commission from a developing country from among the members of each of the following: ESCAP, ECLAC, ECA and ESCWA, unless they were already represented in the Bureau.

89. The Working Group considered it appropriate to increase the criteria for selecting members of the Working Group in order to (a) ensure that the Working Group had a more complete representation of countries at different levels of development and with different economic and statistical systems and (b) ensure greater continuity of members on the Working Group. In this connection, the Working Group recalled that at its eleventh session it had "reiterated the concern previously expressed at its tenth session, that greater continuity in its membership was desirable, and expressed the view that adequate representation of developing countries at the Working Group sessions was essential to its work" (see E/CN.3/1987/21, para. 4). Nevertheless, the Working Group considered it necessary to fix a maximum limit on the size of the Working Group. No agreement was reached on what the maximum size should be and the proposals that were made varied between 10 and 12 members. There was agreement that it was not necessarily the case that the Working Group would have to have for any session the maximum number that might be agreed upon. The Working Group agreed to submit the following proposal to the

Statistical Commission, pointing out, at the same time, that some members of the Working Group had suggested a change to some of the criteria contained therein for selection of the Working Group:

> "The Working Group consists of the officers of the Commission, that is, the Chairman, the three Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur; the representatives to the Commission of the two major contributors to the budget of the United Nations, unless they are already represented in the Bureau; and representatives to the Commission from other Member States selected so as to ensure representation on the Working Group of both developed and developing countries, countries with different economic and statistical systems and with special attention to ensuring representation of developing countries from among the members of each of the following regional commissions: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic Commission for Africa and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia."

90. The Working Group considered that the final agreement would be reached during the twenty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission and that towards that end the Secretariat would help in organizing advance informal consultations among members of the Statistical Commission.

IX. DATES AND PLACE OF THE FOURTEENTH SESSION

91. The Working Group recommended that its fourteenth session be held on dates close to the meeting of the International Statistical Institute, which had already been set for 9-17 September 1991. It had been found in the past that this approach facilitated attendance at the Working Group of the maximum number of members. Consequently, and taking account of scheduled public holidays in Geneva, the Working Group recommended that its fourteenth session be held at Geneva from 19 to 21 September 1991. This recommendation reflected the fact that the International Statistical Institute session will close only on Monday, 17 September 1991 and consequently the earliest that the Working Group could meet would be Wednesday, 19 September 1991, allowing for the members of the Working Group to travel from the site of the International Statistical Institute meeting to Geneva. The Working Group noted that these circumstances resulted in a planned Working Group session of three days rather than the usual four days, which had been found necessary for recent sessions. The Working Group stressed that this arrangement for 1991 should not create a precedent.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1989, Supplement No. 3 (E/1989/21), para. 229.

2/ Ibid., para. 159 (e).

3/ Ibid., paras. 154-159.

Notes (continued)

4/ Ibid., para. 214.

5/ Ibid., paras. 192 (d) and 203 (d) and (e).

6/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1987, Supplement No. 6 (E/1987/19), para. 198 (a).

7/ Ibid., 1989, Supplement No. 3 (E/1989/21), para. 224.

8/ Ibid., 1987, Supplement No. 6 (E/1987/19), paras. 205 and 206; ibid., 1981, Supplement No. 2 (E/1981/12), para. 235.

9/ Ibid., 1989, Supplement No. 3 (E/1989/21), paras. 162 and 163 (a).

10/ Ibid., para. 214.

11/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5236), paras. 209 and 210.

12/ Ibid., para. 212.

Annex

AGENDA FOR THE THIRTEENTH SESSION

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

3. Revision of the System of National Accounts (SNA).

4. International Comparison Programme (ICP).

5. Provisional agenda and documentation for the twenty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission.

6. General development and integration of methodological work.

7. Co-ordination of the statistical data collection activities of international organizations.

8. Identification of ways to accelerate statistical development while ensuring co-ordination in selected fields of statistics.

9. Composition of the Working Group.

10. Dates and place of the fourteenth session.

11. Report of the Working Group to the Statistical Commission.

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SPECIAL ISSUES: REPORT ON INCREASING USER AWARENESS OF THE VALUE OF STATISTICAL OUTPUTS AND SERVICES

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report has been prepared in response to a request made by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session.

The report contains a brief discussion of the issue of user awareness and use of statistics (paras. 5-18), followed by a summary of national experiences in user awareness based on information obtained through a questionnaire circulated to selected Member States (paras. 19-77). The international experience on this topic, also collected by means of a similar questionnaire, is presented in paras. 78-135. Strategies for improving user awareness of statistical outputs and services are provided in paragraphs 136-137. The report concludes with points for discussion by the Commission (para. 138).

* E/CN.3/1991/1.

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INTRODUCTION

1. At its twenty-fifth session, the Statistical Commission decided that the issue of increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services should be included in the agenda of the twenty-sixth session as one of the special discussion topics. 1/

2. The Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination, at its thirteenth session held in Geneva in September 1989, noted that the document to be prepared on this topic should be based on a survey of national and international experiences and would serve as a vehicle for disseminating those experiences for the benefit of all national and international statistical services. 2/

3. Pursuant to the recommendation of the Working Group, the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat prepared a brief questionnaire on user awareness requesting information from selected national and international statistical services. The questionnaire for national statistical services was sent to 47 Member States, including the 24 members of the Statistical Commission, keeping in mind an adequate balance in terms of geographical and other relevant considerations. The questionnaire for international statistical services was sent to 15 specialized agencies and organizations and the statistical divisions of the five regional commissions.

4. By 20 August 1990, the following 31 countries had responded to the questionnaire: Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, Federal Republic of Germany, 3/ Hungary, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Philippines, 4/ Poland, Sweden, Thailand, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, 5/ Uruguay and Zambia. With respect to the questionnaire sent to the international organizations, replies had been received from the following 12: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Labour Office (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO) and Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT). The following four regional commissions had responded: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). A questionnaire was also completed on behalf of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat.

I. USER AWARENESS AND THE USE OF STATISTICS

A. Role of statistics and need for user support

5. The need and the consequent demand for statistics in organized societies have existed for some time. The need for statistics in earlier years was limited to a few areas, such as population, births, deaths, taxation, revenues and expenditures and agricultural and commercial activities. Over time, there has been a steady expansion in the fields for which users expect quantitative data and in the diversity and complexity of ways in which data in any given field are used. The importance of statistics to a large group of users, ranging from the Government to the individual, was appropriately described some time ago in the United Nations Handbook on Statistical Organization, as follows:

> "The demand for statistics of the highest quality by Governments, business, economists, social workers and others, has increased enormously. ... In all fields, both national and international, the work of the statistician is fundamental for comprehending the numerical aspects of the problems to be dealt with, for setting more or less isolated phenomena in their proper perspective, for indicating the significance of parts in relation to the whole and for substituting realistic data for wishful thinking, biased claims and political oratory. In short, statisticians help to shape (economic and) business policy, they furnish navigational guides for the ship of state, they help social agencies which work for the welfare of the people and they help students and the general public to have a more realistic view of the complex economic and social environment in which they live." 6/

6. This statement is just as true today as it was when it was first made in 1954 and has been quoted and reiterated in the revised version of the Handbook issued in 1980. Added to the above, the increased involvement of international organizations in the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics, the rapid changes that have taken place in recent years in electronic data processing and communication technologies and the uses developed in their application to statistics have brought about vastly expanded capabilities for both the production and dissemination of statistical outputs to current and potential users.

7. In the light of these developments, statistical offices, both national and international, are faced with the continuing challenge to utilize to the fullest their capabilities of providing a wide range of outputs and services to their current and potential users.

8. However, many statistical offices today, including those in developed countries, face problems due to the effects of the fiscal constraints increasingly encountered by Governments and international organizations. Freezes imposed on expenditures and, on occasion, reductions have created a situation of scarce resources for national and international statistical offices. As a result, these offices must depend more and more on user support to obtain needed resources, either through direct funding or sales of products and services or indirectly through support of budget requests.

9. In these circumstances, explicit strategies for enlisting direct and indirect user collaboration and support must be identified and employed. Such support would be more easily forthcoming if all actual and potential users had a full appreciation of the value of statistical outputs and services available to them.

B. Level of user awareness

10. Certain groups of users in government agencies, socio-economic planning organizations, libraries, universities, research institutions and international organizations are generally familiar with the outputs and services of statistical offices, particularly in their own area of specialization. However, many in those institutions, the public at large and other potential users may be simply unaware of the outputs of national and international statistical offices. Even where users have some awareness, they may undervalue, and consequently underutilize, the data or perhaps be aware of only a limited set of outputs.

11. Statistical offices disseminate their outputs in a number of different ways. In addition to publications, the traditional means of dissemination, press releases, machine-readable media, such as magnetic tapes, diskettes, CD-ROM, microfiches, microfilms and various other methods are also used, including teletext and on-line access to data bases.

12. Where users are not at all aware of the outputs, it may perhaps be that they have not invested sufficient effort in searching for the data relevant to their needs. In certain situations, it may also be that potential users have failed to recognize the importance of statistical information as a useful tool in decision-making and research. Given these problems, what can producers of data do to communicate to potential users the existence, nature and use of their products?

13. Often, national statistical offices (in developing countries in particular) lack the financial resources to mount an effective information campaign. In such cases, the situation may be exacerbated by the existence of inadequate library facilities, with the result that publications will be insufficiently circulated and their accessibility limited.

14. In countries where resources are available, information strategies may nevertheless be lacking, or perhaps poorly executed. For example, there may be no published schedules for data releases, or scheduled deadlines may not be met. Furthermore, key statistical releases may receive only limited media coverage.

C. Value attached to statistical outputs and services

15. Where users of statistics are aware of the outputs of national and international statistical offices, various quality and quantity aspects of those outputs may mean either that they are of limited value to the users or that users are unable to assess the value, that is the relevance, of the data to their needs.

16. So far as the quantity of data is concerned, the available budget will of course limit the nature and scope of the work programme. Within the budget confines, however, the statistical office may not adequately identify its data users, nor work sufficiently closely with those users in order that programme priorities be set in accordance with the users' needs and the data produced be consequently relevant to those needs. Even if users judge the data to be relevant in general, there may be other quality, aspects such as accuracy, comparability and comprehensiveness, which they feel have not been sufficiently addressed by the statistical office. Data may also be rejected because its quality cannot be verified; that is, users are not informed as to the methodology and procedures used to generate that data.

17. In addition to the quality and quantity aspects, the timeliness with which data is produced will also influence its use. For many users, the issue of timeliness is as equally important as the accuracy and relevance of the data. If users cannot rely on the prompt, on-schedule delivery of the data required to meet their needs, then it is possible that they will look for what they need from an alternative source, use alternative data, or simply do without altogether.

18. Finally, data will be of more value to users the easier it is to organize and analyse. For example, specific tasks often require that published data be reaggregated or disaggregated for specific purposes, or that long-run historical series be readily available. The greater the effort that users need to apply to be able to mould the data to their exact requirements, the lower the value they will assign to that data. This aspect becomes less significant as the electronic dissemination of data supersedes that in published form, and users are more easily able to manipulate data. However, if the statistical office is willing (and technically able) to tailor data to specific user needs, then that data is likely to be utilized to a greater extent than would otherwise be the case.

II. NATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN USER AWARENESS

19. The questionnaire sent to the national statistical offices (NSOs) of 47 Member States consisted of four parts considered relevant to the topic under study and attempted to explore the following main issues: (a) user awareness of the availability of statistical outputs; (b) marketing of statistical outputs and services to increase user awareness and generate revenue; (c) barriers to awareness and the effective use of available statistics and measures taken to reduce those barriers; and (d) changes in the internal management or content of programmes to increase the awareness and use of outputs and services. A summary of the experiences of the 31 NSOs that replied with respect to the above-mentioned issues is provided in the section below.

A. Awareness of the availability of statistical outputs

1. Systematic attempts to assess user awareness

20. The NSOs were asked if they had made any systematic attempts to assess the users' awareness of their outputs and services and, if so, the method employed to make the assessment. The replies from respondents indicated that most of the countries had taken initiatives to assess users' needs and/or awareness of their outputs and services by means of systematic surveys, occasional studies or using indirect feedback from users on the basis of written, telephone or in-person inquiries, requests or complaints regarding their outputs.

21. The respondents indicated that they had employed one or more of the following methods to make an assessment of users' awareness:

(a) Questionnaires;

(b) Telephone and electronic inquiries;

(c) Face-to-face interviews;

(d) Workshops, seminars, conferences, consultations and meetings;

(e) Inserting reply cards in publications;

(f) Monitoring borrowings from statistical libraries;

(g) Analysing sales figures;

(h) Analysing requests for data and/or inquiries or complaints about the data.

22. Some countries had hired market research companies or consultant firms to conduct the studies.

23. While comprehensive surveys aimed at the public at large were rare (except in Japan, the Philippines and Sweden), several countries reported that, in conducting studies, they had relied mainly on contacting selected groups of existing and potential users gleaned from subscription lists, free mailing lists or known focal points, such as libraries, universities, research community and central and local government bodies.

2. Level of awareness

24. The results of the evaluations by the NSOs generally indicated very low awareness on the part of the public at large. Among the respondents confirming this finding, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) noted that its various studies on this issue revealed a low awareness level of ABS products and the ABS in general.

25. Surveys undertaken by Statistics Canada also produced similar results. Beyond a core group of very experienced data users, they reported a general lack of knowledge of the Agency's output and uncertainty about how to go about finding information.

26. One developing country reported that because of the low literacy rate, the common man does not generally appreciate the importance of statistics and some users, including mass media representatives, look at their statistics with suspicion and utilize their outputs and services only as a last resort when such data are not available elsewhere.

27. Some of the respondents noted that, generally, users tend to confine themselves to the main statistical compendiums. The demand is usually greatest for such multi-topic publications.

28. It appears, however, that certain groups of users in government agencies, socio-economic planners, management consultants, information agencies, businesses, universities, libraries, those involved in science and research and international organizations proved to be very familiar with the statistical outputs and services. The replies from most of the respondents indicated that the level of awareness of these users was particularly high in areas of special concern to them.

29. In addition, mass media also expressed much interest in certain indicators that were newsworthy and of broad interest to the public. For instance, cost of living indexes, trade statistics, social and demographic statistics and information on the labour force and unemployment, industry and agriculture, gross domestic product (GDP) and per capita income statistics were very much sought after by the news media.

30. In most countries, much of the statistical output has been developed and prepared in consultation with the interested governmental, legislative and administrative bodies. These tend to represent a large group of satisfied users in almost all cases. However, private and academic interests are usually less satisfied with some quality aspects, which are often addressed either through meetings with groups of users or with individuals through their specific inquiries directed at the producers.

3. Importance and priorities attached to outputs

31. It appears that even though the priorities attached to certain characteristics of statistical outputs vary somewhat among each group of users, timeliness, in the sense of the data itself being up to date, prompt, on-schedule delivery of the output, and accuracy of the data are of the most concern to them. Those NSOs which listed what they considered to be their users' priorities in order of importance placed timeliness ahead of accuracy, indicating that some users (the media, in particular) were indeed prepared, at least to some extent, to trade off the latter for the former. One developed country commented that it appeared that many users believed that an excessive concern for data quality affected timeliness, while another reported that the media were always interested in the most up-to-date

findings and were the least understanding of the length of time required to process survey findings and to prepare data releases. Another NSO stated that users' interest in statistical indicators was lost due to lack of timeliness in their availability.

32. A large number of respondents also listed comparability, comprehensiveness, consistency, objectivity, relevance and reliability of the data as additional factors to which their users assign importance. Of these factors, the majority of users in Government, research and planning singled out various aspects of comprehensiveness. In Canada and the United States, for example, users were demanding data in ever greater geographic detail. Analysts tended to single out comparability as being of major importance.

33. Only one national statistical office indicated that users attached a high priority to the precise documentation of the data and to the provision of methodological explanations.

B. Marketing statistical outputs and services to increase user awareness and generate revenue

1. Incidence of the marketing approach

34. The extent to which NSOs market their outputs varies greatly among countries. However, the movement towards a market-oriented approach in the dissemination of statistical outputs and services appears to be quite pronounced, particularly with respect to several NSOs from developed economies. Of those NSOs which responded to the questionnaire, Australia, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States appear to be highly committed to policies of increasing user awareness of their outputs by vigorously promoting and charging for them.

35. While marketing policies exist in nearly all other responding countries, the extent to which they are systematized varies significantly, and virtually all countries consider that much more needs to be done.

36. Many countries for which offsetting a portion of their costs of production of statistical outputs through sales is not an overriding issue nevertheless have initiated extensive marketing campaigns aimed simultaneously at disseminating their statistical outputs as widely as possible and at more effectively utilizing allocated public funds by having users meet some of the costs of distributing the data. In the case of France, a department specializing in the dissemination of data has been responsible, since 1970, for defining, marketing and distributing outputs from the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE) (publications included).

2. Promoting statistical outputs

(a) Advertising

37. In general, NSOs appear to be directing increasing attention to advertising their outputs as a means of expanding their utilization among potential users.

38. All NSOs indicated that they maintain a catalogue of their own publications, including future release dates. With respect to promotional activities, however, a number of countries reported that they did not engage in extensive marketing efforts for their products and/or that their efforts in that regard were not fully systematic. Among that group of countries, some basic methods by which they advertised their products were generally described. Those methods included:

(a) Cross advertising in own or other government publications;

(b) Publication schedules printed as separate document(s) and/or published in current newspapers, statistical journals, trade papers and the like;

(c) Press releases;

(d) Direct mailings to known users and/or target markets;

(e) Exchanges with other organizations and libraries.

39. A number of other countries have adopted more systematic promotional policies than those listed above. These countries have added any or all of the following to the gamut of their promotional activities:

(a) Summary brochures, pamphlets and broadsheets;

(b) Stands and displays at business fairs and exhibitions;

(c) Press conferences and media interviews;

(d) Seminars, lectures, and workshops with users;

(e) Electronic bulletin boards.

40. A number of NSOs appear to be mounting more intensive promotional campaigns. These NSOs have established special units not only to deal with data requests and inquiries but to maintain personal contacts with key users and to actively solicit new users through personal consultations.

(b) Other methods

41. In addition to advertising outputs, nearly all NSOs that responded promote their products by consulting with at least some user groups prior to at least some statistical inquiries in order to, inter alia, assess user needs for the prospective data, provide a forum for users in which they may present their views

on the current project, assess the burden on various reporters and convince them of the usefulness of their efforts in reporting the requested data. The United States, for example, reported that users submitted over 40,000 comments in response to 1990 census issues.

42. France also reported that to ensure a better consensus between producers of statistics, users and interviewees, it had established the Conseil national de la statistique (CNIS). Almost all INSEE projects are undertaken after approval by the CNIS.

43. Many NSOs hold seminars for the users of their data after the data have been published.

44. Some countries (for example, Islamic Republic of Iran, Norway, Poland) cited the promotion of awareness of their statistical outputs by using them as texts in schools, colleges and universities. In addition, other countries compile lists of statistical outputs suitable for schoolchildren.

3. Charging fees and assessing the value of statistical outputs

45. All respondents indicated that they charge some fees for at least some of their outputs. The prevalent practice is to charge for data disseminated electronically and for data specially tailored to specific user needs. While the reasons underlying these charges, and hence their nature and extent, varies greatly among countries, the general tendency among NSOs has been to increase the extent to which (at least) some of the costs of disseminating statistical outputs are offset through sales of those outputs. There appear to be three main reasons for this turn of events:

(a) Some NSOs (those in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, for example) because of changes in budget appropriations policies, have been directly charged with the responsibility of meeting an increased proportion of their operating costs from the sales of their own products and services;

(b) Other NSOs (those in the Netherlands and Sweden, for example), having been confronted by reduced government funding for their programmes, have sought ways to bridge the financial gap;

(c) Among NSOs not specifically dependent upon supplemental income from users of their products, many indicated a desire to more effectively use allocated public funds by having the users meet at least the marginal costs of disseminating their statistical data.

46. From their experiences in actively marketing their outputs, countries indicated that charging for these outputs primarily enables the NSO to:

(a) Recoup the costs of disseminating data;

(b) Achieve revenue targets;

(c) Encourage users to determine their real needs for publications;

(d) Ensure that market demand for outputs be an important consideration in the setting of programme priorities. This involves assessing user demands and adapting statistical products to suit them.

47. Secondary results of adopting the "user-pays" principle are that:

(a) Some publications are rationalized or eliminated (Australia, Canada);

(b) Some projects become entirely, or almost entirely, user-funded.

48. A number of NSOs indicated that other government departments paid their share in the cost of producing statistical information of special interest to them. In Sweden, for example, each ministry is charged with the direct responsibility of funding the statistical programmes with which it is associated. Since this approach was adopted in 1987-1988, the awareness and knowledge about statistics has increased markedly within the ministries.

49. Among developing countries, one NSO noted that it had received budgetary support from various international organizations for very specific projects, such as censuses and sample surveys. Similarly, another acknowledged that in order to carry out special surveys and censuses, it had requested and received technical or economic assistance from national and international organizations.

50. One developing country, however, encountered resistance from users in other government departments when requested to meet some of the expenses incurred in producing statistical outputs. It was believed that any payment in that regard was of no use, since the government budget was transferred from one pocket to another, incurring unnecessary expenses in such a transfer.

51. Some countries stressed that private sector financial support had rescued some projects from cancellation. Another developing country, on the other hand, indicated that it had experienced difficulty in soliciting private sector support because of its inability to produce current, disaggregated data as desired by that sector.

4. Market orientation versus public service orientation for national statistical offices

52. Most NSOs that responded to the questionnaire indicated that their primary responsibility was to satisfy their Governments' needs for statistical data and to make such data widely available to the citizens of the country. No NSO, however, indicated any conflict between this public-service aspect of their function and the market-oriented approach associated with charging fees for their outputs, since they felt that a sufficient quantity of data was made available (to the press, libraries, etc.) free of charge.

53. One NSO expressed a note of caution concerning the commissioning of work. If it was not planned for, it could cause a backlog of work, and hence there was a danger that, due to preoccupation with jobs that brought in commercial revenue, work of a public service character might remain unidentified and undone. However, that NSO went on to add that the experience of working with funding from more than one source was very positive. It provided more contacts with users, was regarded as stimulating by the staff, raised the level of competence and permitted a better utilization of resources.

C. Barriers to awareness and use of statistics and measures taken to remedy them

1. Specializing outputs in response to user needs

54. The replies received from most of the NSOs reflected a positive experience in specializing their outputs to make them more responsive to user needs and the degree of success of these experiences. Many countries reported a number of different measures to respond to this issue and various levels of success in tailoring their outputs and services to provide an effective response to user needs.

55. In addition, it appears that in responding to user needs, the use of modern computer technology is increasingly becoming an important key to success on the part of many countries, even though this process is still at an evolutionary stage.

56. As an illustration of the use of modern computer technology, in Australia, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) indicated that in order to provide a relevant and useful service, some tailoring of existing products had occurred. An example was a range of floppy disk products which allowed clients to specify data items of interest: a floppy disk was prepared in accordance with their needs. The response had been encouraging, and an expansion of the facility was envisaged.

57. Japan also reported that data was being provided on diskettes in addition to the conventional media in the form of book reports and magnetic tape. Furthermore, a new service had recently been started providing government agencies on-line access to its data base, SISMAC. Local self-governing bodies were also being provided reports of monthly surveys through personal computer telecommunication networks as soon as such reports were available.

58. In the Netherlands, increasing use was being made of new media, such as videotext, diskettes, tape and CD-ROM for the dissemination of data and press releases.

59. New Zealand indicated that it was able to deliver its outputs to users in any medium required, such as hard copy, diskettes, computer tapes or on-line access to INFOS, with the policy of interaction with the users' own software. In addition, CD-ROM technology and electronic mail were also in use.

60. The increasing use of modern computer technology in responding to user needs was also evident in the replies received from various United States agencies.

Among the agencies reporting, the United States Bureau of the Census, for instance, noted that new product mediums, such as CD-ROM, diskettes, microfiche and electronic telecommunication of information, were added to its data delivery system. The United States Bureau of Economic Analysis also indicated that its data were now available in a variety of mediums - hard copy, computer tapes, and diskette - and that a considerable portion of its information could also be accessed electronically through the Department's Electronic Bulletin Board (EBB).

2. Efforts towards improving communications with existing and potential users

61. Most of the NSOs reported that they had tried or were in the process of trying to improve communications with their existing and potential users.

62. A number of NSOs in both developed and developing countries indicated that one means of improving communication with selected user groups was through seminars, conferences, user forums and producers/users meetings.

63. Other approaches to improving communications cited were: issuing press releases to local and national media; distributing quarterly bulletins describing changes in statistical programmes, new products and market tests; direct contacts (written, personal or telephone) with users to determine their needs and to inform them of other developments; and conducting surveys through the use of questionnaires.

64. Efforts to improve communications with existing and potential users through the use of one or more of these methods were generally considered to be successful. Sweden, for instance, indicated that commercial revenues from the sale of its products and services had increased continuously, and New Zealand pointed out that an indication of the success of its efforts could easily be measured by the increase in its revenues, which had risen 17 times over a period of four years, from $NZ 400,000 to $NZ 7,000,000.

D. Changes in the internal management or content of programmes found to be useful to facilitate the awareness and use of outputs and services

1. Changes to the internal management and content of programmes

65. One of the approaches evident in the replies of several NSOs was that the formation of a marketing unit could play an important role in facilitating the awareness and use of statistical outputs and services.

66. Australia, for instance, reported that it had created a specialized marketing division with the following programme: (a) development of a current and flexible marketing plan; (b) establishment of a sales force; (c) more emphasis on client needs; (d) establishment of sales information as part of individual project performance indicators.

67. France also noted that some important steps had been taken on that issue and described them as follows: (a) INSEE publications were no longer placed under the sole responsibility of the statisticians producing the data; their design, editing and production were now handled by a unit specialized in data dissemination; (b) sales of publications and replies to inquiries were assigned to information bureaux created in each region; and (c) a system of feedback has been instituted to help statisticians producing the data by informing them about the specific needs and complaints of users.

68. The Netherlands replied that a separate section for marketing and public relations had been instituted recently to deal with the issue.

69. In Sweden, a Marketing Council had been established in 1989 to develop the total range of products and services offered by Statistics Sweden, irrespective of how they were funded, and to adjust them to the users' demands. The Council would advise on general matters pertaining to publications, services and specific paid jobs for clients, develop plans and policies, and generally support and co-ordinate efforts to improve these activities. Policy and goals for accepting, costing and generally treating paid commissions had been formulated, and strategies for reaching the goals had been drafted. A market information system would be constructed to provide data on market trends and how the various services and products were bought and used.

70. Market orientation appears to be under consideration in Bulgaria and Hungary. In addition, Bulgaria reported that it was considering, among other actions, editions in foreign languages and a major updating of the content of its statistical publications by including much more comprehensive information. In Hungary, work is now under way to clarify market-oriented activities and those activities financed by the State budget. The establishment of a new system of operation and financing is currently under development.

71. Other measures indicated by NSOs involving changes in their internal organization or programme content included:

(a) Creation of standing management committees in the areas of dissemination, communication, market research and marketing, and feedback to programme areas on costs and revenues of the publications they produce;

(b) Establishment of a publication division;

(c) Use of information services to provide background information on the results of official statistics and close co-operation with the press for the dissemination of statistical information;

(d) Introduction of modern data processing equipment and the creation of a national information centre to effectively meet a growing demand for statistical information;

(e) Establishment of a public relations department to disseminate information on statistical outputs and to seek the co-operation of respondents;

(f) Formation of an analytical (research) unit to ensure a more comprehensive analysis of data;

(g) Participation of all key section managers and above in a seminar on services marketing run by top marketing academics, the introduction of accrual accounting and the establishment of a financial management information system, the development of presentation standards for publications and news releases including a uniform house style and better procedures for quality control;

(h) Passing of a new act involving the central bureau of statistics calling for comprehensive organizational changes that will affect the strategies for increasing user awareness;

(i) Various measures to enhance marketing and information, such as creation of a statistical information unit and utilization of the central governmental printing office to inform the public about new products and services and their marketing.

2. Additional or alternative strategies

72. It appears that many NSOs have made increasing efforts in recent years to make large sections of the potential user population familiar with the supply of statistical products and services. To achieve this goal, diversified strategies were employed.

73. Canada, for example, reported that a Task Force on Access and Awareness was established in 1989 which is expected to come up with a number of recommendations to improve access to and awareness of Statistics Canada's products and services.

74. Sweden noted that, for a fee, Statistics Sweden would provide tailor-made software for specific micro-data bases. For researchers from universities and other government agencies, arrangements were made to set up at Statistics Sweden work stations with a microcomputer and qualified assistance relating to the statistical methods and materials that will be available.

75. Several other NSOs reported that advertising on television and/or in the press has been one of the strategies that they were considering or actually implementing.

76. Contacts with potential users through press conferences and regular meetings with media representatives, seminars and conferences for interested parties were also among the approaches used by some countries.

77. The development of information directories, brochures and/or catalogues and issuing free copies of certain publications were also reported to be among the additional strategies considered. One country indicated that it was planning to reactivate its national statistical association by enlarging its membership and conducting frequent producer-user meetings under its auspices. It was also planning to reduce the prices of its sale publications to reach a larger audience among the general public.

III. INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN USER AWARENESS

78. The questionnaire circulated to the international organizations and the regional commissions was essentially the same in content as the national questionnaire.

79. The following paragraphs contain a summary of the replies by the international community describing the experience in user awareness of statistical outputs and services. The experience of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat on the issue is included.

A. Awareness of availability of statistical outputs

1. Systematic attempts to assess user awareness

80. The following specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations system also reported that various initiatives had been undertaken to survey users' needs and/or awareness of their outputs and services: ECA, ECE, ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, ILO, IMF, UNIDO, UNCTAD and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat. The methods used to make the assessment were one or more of the following:

(a) Questionnaires;

(b) Workshops, seminars, conferences, consultations and meetings;

(c) Inserting reply cards in publications;

(d) Analysing sales figures;

(e) Hiring market research companies or consultant firms to conduct surveys;

(f) Analysing requests for data.

81. In the recent past, efforts of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat included a survey by means of a reader's card inserted in selected yearbooks to gather information on readers and hiring a consultant firm to study the characteristics of current users of statistical publications and to identify means of increasing the dissemination of such publications. The latter survey included several thousand individuals and encompassed 140 countries. These surveys were followed in 1987 by a review of current practices in the production of the recurrent publications of the Statistical Office, their limitations and suggestions for improvements.

82. The IMF indicated that in 1988-1989 it had hired a consulting firm to conduct an assessment on awareness of availability of statistical outputs.

83. In addition, ICAO, UNCTAD, ECA, ECE, ESCAP and ESCWA also reported conducting questionnaire surveys. While these surveys were generally very helpful in making

an assessment of users' awareness, results of some of the inquiries were too general to allow a comprehensive analysis.

84. While some organizations reported that they had not made any attempts to assess user awareness, they nevertheless commented upon what they perceived as being the case. ICAO, UNESCO and UPU indicated that their products are widely used by their clientele in the specialized area in which they serve, and their perception is that the products and services provided by them are well accepted.

2. Level of awareness

85. The information provided by the international organizations indicates that the level of awareness has been difficult to evaluate.

86. The surveys conducted by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat revealed that its outputs are used extensively by government agencies, universities, research institutions and other international organizations and reference libraries. Its publications are highly appreciated because of their unique status as world-wide statistical references. Many of the specialized publications, such as methodological manuals, classifications and studies, are considered to be extremely valuable to the work of national statistical offices. However, with respect to certain outputs containing data on special branches of industry (such as minerals, textiles, chemicals, iron and steel) there appears to be a low level of user awareness in many markets.

87. Some organizations, such as UPU, UNIDO and UNESCO, reported that specialized users were generally familiar with the outputs of their organization and in the case of IMF, the survey of users had shown a high degree of awareness with the Fund's statistical publications, particularly with International Financial Statistics, its main publication.

88. UNIDO indicated that its statistical publications were used by Governments and a wide range of research institutions, although private firms did not seem to be very familiar with its outputs and services.

89. UNCTAD reported that replies to its readership survey indicated extensive use of its documents for background information and economic analysis (95 per cent) and, to a lesser degree, for education and for making policy decisions (24 and 18 per cent, respectively).

90. ECA reported that the level of awareness of its outputs and services was very high in the member countries of the region, particularly with national statistical offices. The users of its outputs included, in addition to the national statistical services, ministries, planning organizations, research institutes, universities, intergovernmental agencies and international organizations. However, because of a lack of organized library facilities at the national statistical offices, some of its publications are insufficiently circulated, and a large number of potential users fail to be aware of them. Users are said to be very aware of ECA regional advisory services.

91. ESCAP noted that its readership survey also reflected a high level of user awareness and active use of its publications.

3. Importance and priorities attached to outputs

92. Where the awareness of users was established by various means of assessment, it appeared that the elements of timeliness and accuracy or reliability were considered extremely important by users.

93. Other factors that were assigned importance by users were relevance, consistency, coverage and comparability of data sets, regardless of the subject-matter covered.

B. Marketing statistical outputs and services to increase user awareness and generate revenue

1. Incidence of the marketing approach

94. As is the case with the national statistical offices, marketing of statistical products varies significantly among international organizations. In general, however, it appears that they are adopting, or in some cases planning to adopt, an increasingly market-oriented approach to disseminating their outputs.

95. Both IMF and ILO appear to be highly committed to a policy of increasing the user awareness of their outputs by vigorously promoting and charging for them. As a result of the survey conducted in 1988-1989, IMF is currently developing promotional material and an organizational strategy aimed at securing new subscribers to their materials and encouraging greater use of them by existing users and subscribers. The policy is also designed to increase revenue to IMF cost-effective marketing and distribution.

96. ILO has actively marketed its products for some time. The organization believes this to be not only a necessity, since its regular budget does not cover the costs of promotion or sales administration, but also desirable, since it results in a larger dissemination of the organization's data and so more effectively serves the needs of its constituency.

97. On the other hand, several agencies considered that there were limits to employing marketing techniques to increase user awareness of statistical outputs. While the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat vigorously promotes its statistical outputs, in line with decisions of the General Assembly on United Nations publication policies and the views of the Statistical Commission, it adheres to the principle that profit should not be the primary consideration in undertaking publication and dissemination activities. At its twenty-third session, the Statistical Commission agreed that the primary objective of such activities is, in fact, to ensure a wide dissemination of statistics, so that the free distribution of publications is a major element in this regard. 7/ At its last (twenty-fifth) session, the Statistical Commission reaffirmed that "the collation

and dissemination of international statistics by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat met a well-established and justified need" and noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 38/32 E, has specified that sales figures were only one of several criteria specified for determining the usefulness of publications. 8/ Similarly, ECE and UNESCO suggested that user awareness in developing countries and in countries which normally have problems with freely convertible currencies could only be improved by increasing the number of complementary copies of outputs distributed therein.

98. UPU indicated that, because of the nature of its product, it was able to identify a core group of customers, and that special marketing efforts would not increase the use of that product.

2. Promoting statistical outputs

(a) Advertising

99. The extent to which international organizations advertise their products varies greatly - in terms of both nature and extent. Most organizations maintain a catalogue of their own publications, advertise within their own publications and have some form of direct-mail newsletter.

100. Until recently, advertising and promotion of sales publications of the United Nations Secretariat were contracted to commercial firms. Beginning in 1988, however, this function was assumed by the Sales Section of the United Nations Secretariat (this Section constitutes a part of the Publishing Division of the Department of Conference Services). Since then the advertising space has increased each year along with improvements in the design of advertisements. Sales publications are listed in the annual catalogues and updates and direct-mail pieces are produced dealing only with statistical publications. The Sales Section also produces flyers for conferences involving a variety of professional and library associations. This activity is supplemented by utilizing the assistance of the United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) and representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

101. A number of organizations felt that there was an advantage in utilizing the promotional and distributional services of commercial firms, in addition to those provided through United Nations channels. UNIDO, for example, reported that it is currently trying to publish its Handbook of Industrial Statistics through a commercial publisher with a higher capability of international marketing and sales promotion, and a world-wide distribution network.

102. ILO also indicated that it advertises its outputs by issuing prospectuses, buying advertising space in various magazines, newspapers and professional journals, attending exhibitions to promote these outputs and by cross-advertising in statistical publications.

103. Press releases are also issued by some organizations. FAO and GATT have recently established special units to promote and disseminate their materials.

(b) Other methods

104. It seems that the majority of international organizations do not rely on commercial marketing to promote the use of their products. Greater reliance is placed on conferences, committees and working groups, as forums through which national statistical offices and other interested parties can voice their support for statistical programmes which meet their needs and discuss the work programme in general and details regarding financial and technical support to developing countries. The Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, for instance, participates in perhaps 20-30 specialized international meetings per year in which user needs concerning virtually all of the fields in which it compiles statistics are specially addressed and in which users participate.

105. Many of the organizations hold workshops and seminars aimed at increasing user awareness of specific projects by encouraging contact and dialogue between the users and collectors of statistics. In ESCWA, for example, this is done both before and after household survey projects. In developing countries, training workshops (before censuses, for example) are also scheduled as are meetings to discuss special issues, such as the revision of the United Nations System of National Accounts.

106. Also, the publications of international organizations are automatically distributed to the national statistical offices of member countries and usually to other agencies at the country level, to other international organizations and United Nations agencies and to agencies with which there are exchange agreements. Furthermore, many of the regular statistical publications and machine-readable products are routinely listed in international reference guides.

107. In response to General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV), in which the Secretary-General was requested, inter alia, to supply adequate basic national data that would increase international public awareness of countries' development efforts, the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat issues World Statistics in Brief (United Nations Statistical Pocketbook). The aim of this publication is that it should serve as an appropriate vehicle for disseminating, in compact form, important basic facts relating to various countries.

3. Charging fees and assessing the value of statistical outputs

108. Some organizations (WHO and UNESCO, for example) charge no fees to distribute printed material to any interested party. Others have a more mixed approach. Some United Nations regional commissions (ECA and ESCAP) indicated that some publications were priced, while others were provided free. Those that were priced were done so by the United Nations Sales Section, New York, and the method of pricing was not known to the Commissions. Other organizations, such as ICAO, sold their publications on a marginal cost basis. FAO was not aware of the mechanism by which its outputs were priced but indicated that it was "most probably just enough to cover production costs".

109. IMF and ILO indicated that their pricing policies aimed, to a large extent, at cost recoverability. These organizations also appeared to have the most vigorous

and systematic campaign to advertise their products. They believe fees to be a good means of determining the actual needs and interests of users. Through its 1988/89 survey, IMF was able to determine that when users were sufficiently aware of their products, they were indeed prepared to pay for them.

110. Those organizations with flexible pricing policies for published material indicated that no attempts have been made to otherwise assess their products in terms of marketability. Nevertheless, most nominated certain of their outputs which they believed generated the most user interest.

111. All international organizations which maintain electronic data bases charge all users for access to them. There seems to be agreement that selling machine-readable products is both an excellent source of revenue and a cost-effective means to distribute the information maintained.

4. Market orientation versus public service orientation for international organizations

112. All international organizations stressed the importance of meeting the demands of member countries and providing them with adequate statistical information as required by their various charters. As such, some organizations indicated that they provided only a public service (UNESCO and ICAO, for example). Similarly, the reply provided by EUROSTAT noted that the information disseminated by that organization is that which is required by the Commission for its policy needs; thus client product requirements have no role in the products made available.

113. Others believed that they were able to balance their roles as public service agencies and market-orientated agencies by virtue of the fact that some of their outputs were provided free of charge while some were distributed for a fee, as deemed appropriate. In addition, some organizations that sell data charge different rates to different users. UNIDO and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, for example, sell their machine-readable output at higher rates to commercial firms than to Governments and universities.

114. The policy of the United Nations Secretariat regarding publications is to provide them free to Governments and national and international statistical services and to sell them to the private sector and public at large at pre-established prices.

C. Barriers to awareness and use of statistics and measures taken to remedy them

1. Specializing outputs in response to user needs

115. The question inquiring about the recent experiences that the international organizations may have had in specializing their outputs to make them more responsive to user needs elicited a number of replies reflecting a common concern on the part of several organizations.

116. The Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat has also been following an approach by which its outputs, on the basis of contacts with users, are continuously evolving to respond to users' requirements. During the past several years, a number of changes have been introduced in the content of recurrent publications of the Statistical Office. These improvements include the increased use of bilingual texts, the introduction of graphics, new tables on particular series, improvements in the scope and coverage of the publications, improved timeliness and a better quality of presentation. In addition, several publications were consolidated or eliminated, while at the same time the number of ad hoc statistical publications responding to specific user needs was increased. Participation with users in official and professional meetings appears to be a very effective method employed by the Statistical Office to improve user understanding of available outputs and monitor user priorities and requirements.

117. ICAO indicated that its statistics programme is kept under continuous scrutiny by the governing bodies and is comprehensively reviewed every five-eight years by a representative body of member States to ensure that it remains responsive to user needs. The most recent comprehensive review took place in April 1989.

118. IMF also reported that it was in the process of reviewing all its statistical publications to make them more useful to users and was considering expanding its data coverage and increasing the use of graphics in its outputs.

119. ILO, on the other hand, listed a number of special initiatives in its efforts to be more responsive to user needs. These included: (a) making available on diskette and on tape parts of its statistical data base, LABORSTA, and furnishing them on request; (b) a new series of publications entitled "Statistical Sources and Methods" aimed at providing methodological descriptions of all the statistical series published in the ILO Yearbook and The Bulletin of Labour Statistics; (c) a programme of internationally comparable data so as to help users to make international comparisons; and (d) changing over to publishing data by source (e.g., household surveys and censuses, establishment surveys and censuses, administrative records) instead of by subject (e.g., economically active population, employment, unemployment).

120. The reply from FAO noted that a major effort was under way to introduce the use of an international classification to make its data more transparent for external users.

121. The experience of ECA, ESCAP and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat reflected a genuine concern in the areas of timeliness, coverage and quality of data. ECA reported that with respect to timeliness, greater attention was now being paid to desk-top publishing and similar modern technologies. To expand the coverage of data, a number of alternative methods were now being employed, such as taking advantage of advisory missions to countries to obtain country level data and requesting statistics on magnetic tapes or diskettes from the United Nations and other agencies. To improve the quality of data, computer printouts containing basic data were sent back to countries for verification, filling of gaps and updating, with data received being subjected to thorough checking and cross-checking with those received from other sources. Efforts in

these areas have been relatively successful, but the degree of success has varied from country to country, and from subject area to subject area. ESCAP efforts to achieve data quality and timeliness included merging some of their publications and revising their contents and formats. The Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat is working to reduce the time lags associated with acquiring national data, processing and compiling that data and printing and distributing publications in an effort to improve the timeliness of the dissemination of statistical data.

122. Replies received from some of the agencies, such as UNESCO, UPU and WHO, indicated that in the absence of any feedback from users, no modifications were currently being considered in their outputs.

2. Efforts towards improving communications with existing and potential users

123. A number of the agencies indicated that they had taken some steps to improve communications with existing and potential users of statistics. As a part of a General Assembly mandated self-evaluation programme, the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat has recently begun an assessment of the effectiveness of its programme of work in the compilation and dissemination of various areas of statistics. So far, this has been done by means of a survey questionnaire to users and potential users of the United Nations publications Energy Statistics Yearbook and Energy Balances and Electricity Profiles. Similar surveys are planned to cover other fields. In addition, the effective use of new technologies to reach users is a high priority in the Statistical Office, and a number of experiments in diskette, on-line, magnetic tape and CD-ROM dissemination are in progress in the Office and through third parties. While users have demonstrated considerable interest in them, it is not yet possible to provide any clear evaluation of the results of those experiments.

124. FAO reported that since 1985 it had been distributing copies of its data banks to international organizations four times a year and that, beginning in 1987, it had also instituted on-line access to the AGROSTAT International System to major national and international users.

125. The reply from ILO also described several measures, including the sending of questionnaires and/or publications not only to responsible ministries (usually Ministries of Labour), but also to Central Statistical Offices directly, attempts to improve and increase the advertisements of its publications, and standardization of the appearance of its publications so as to make them more readily recognizable.

126. UNESCO efforts in this area included the preparation and dissemination of a statistical newsletter with a view to improving its communications with correspondents in member States, a step which was well received.

127. ECA reported that the UNDP offices in various countries in the region, Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs), advisory missions and "courier" services were being used with increased frequency, and that these efforts had achieved a reasonable degree of success. However, improvements were still needed with respect to some countries.

128. ESCAP, on the other hand, indicated that whenever it received inquiries about its publications, a list of its sale and non-sale publications were sent to such potential users. As this campaign had just started, its effects were not yet fully known.

D. Changes in the internal management or content of programmes found to be useful to facilitate the awareness and use of outputs and services

1. Changes to the internal management or content of programmes

129. In order to deal more effectively with this issue, IMF reported that it had placed all its statistical publications under a single manager. It was believed that this arrangement would help improve the content and assure cost-effectiveness.

130. The response from UNESCO indicated that the General Conference of UNESCO, at its 1989 meeting, had approved the creation of an advisory group for the purpose of suggesting improvements in the content of UNESCO data collection and its dissemination programme.

131. ICAO also replied that it was in the process of developing a comprehensive programme for increased automation of the collection, analysis and transmission of aviation statistics.

132. ECA reflected that it had directed its efforts towards producing some outputs and services more responsive to specific country needs along with operational activities aimed at the training of local staff and the building of national capability.

133. ESCAP explained that as a result of its readership survey, its statistical publications programme was rationalized so as to make it more user-oriented. Users who are on its mailing list are regularly informed about the new issues of statistical publications through the Statistical Newsletter and through recurrent publications. This method, according to ESCAP, has been found to be effective in increasing the awareness of its statistical products.

2. Additional or alternative strategies

134. Among the strategies considered to be employed to increase user awareness were the following:

(a) Dissemination of selected publications on diskettes and CD-ROM (FAO);

(b) A publication on labour indicators with graphics to attract potential users who do not wish to go through large quantities of statistics, but to simply extract key indicators (ILO);

(c) Initiation of publicity campaigns on specific programmes, with the assistance of audio-visual presentations (ICAO);

(d) Improvement and diversification of statistical indicators to be presented in statistical publications (UNIDO);

(e) Creation of an integrated range of products across all media types (paper, on-line, CD-ROM, diskette, etc.) and measures to improve the current links on dissemination with the member States of the European Community to establish a dissemination network of European Statistical Offices (EUROSTAT).

135. ECA reported that its strategy also involved demonstrations of the use of quantitative information in development planning, monitoring and evaluations during workshops. With respect to services, periodic publication of activities undertaken by the regional advisers and other staff was one method of increasing user awareness of such services.

IV. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING USER AWARENESS

136. To increase resources and improve capabilities, statistical offices require the support of their users. A close relationship of a statistical office with its principal users will ensure the relevance of its work programme to their needs and hence improve their awareness and support.

137. The replies received from the national and international statistical offices contained a number of strategies that have been successful in improving the user awareness and support of their statistical outputs and services. These strategies are listed below:

Direct forms of outreach and contacts with users

(a) Systematic contacts with users employing the best possible means at hand to monitor their current needs and their assessment of available outputs and services;

(b) Wide dissemination of the advance work programme with schedule of dates when specific outputs or services will be available to users and timeliness in adhering to such a schedule;

(c) General and periodic press releases to inform users of key outputs with graphic illustrations and simple language;

(d) General and detailed presentations of outputs to different target groups through general or specialized seminars or workshops;

(e) Use of information directories, summary brochures, pamphlets, broadsheets, stands and displays, press conferences and media interviews, electronic bulletin boards, lectures, seminars and workshops with users to keep them informed and interested;

Strategies involving changes in the internal management and content of the statistical work programme

(f) Creation of a public relations department or information centre/specialized marketing unit, as the case may be, to handle dissemination and/or marketing of statistical outputs and services, to conduct market research and to be responsible for the various aspects of dealing with current and potential users;

(g) Ensuring greater collaborative efforts and co-ordination between the producers of statistics and distributors/marketing agents of publications where such functions are carried by different organizational units;

(h) Establishment of producer/user committees and advisory groups to involve users in the early planning stages of a statistical programme or undertaking in a given area, and to take into account their views and their needs so that the project would be of interest to a larger audience and its benefits would be greater than it would otherwise; to follow the same procedure in the analysis stage;

(i) Development of a system by which an integrated range of products would be made available across all media types, for example, printed outputs, different types of machine readable data, access to networks (data banks or data bases), and electronic bulletin boards;

(j) Establishment of a wider dissemination network to reach a greater number of users;

(k) A permanent commitment to improved quality, especially in the areas of timeliness, accuracy, coverage, comparability, comprehensiveness, portability of outputs and detailed analysis of results;

(l) Greater participation of technical staff in specialized meetings of professional bodies to disseminate methodology and research utilized to improve the quality of outputs and services;

(m) With a view to improve the problem of timeliness, more active participation in the planning for and decisions relating to the issuance and distribution of statistical publications;

(n) Measures to create conditions that would build confidence in a statistical service as an impartial, objective and competent institution.

V. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

138. The Statistical Commission may wish to:

(a) Review and comment on the national and international experience reported in efforts to increase user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services;

(b) Discuss, taking into account the increasing fiscal constraints faced by statistical offices, the issue of marketing of statistical products and services versus public service orientation of the statistical offices at the national and international levels;

(c) Identify those strategies that it considers most likely to succeed in bringing about greater user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1989, Supplement No. 3 (E/1989/21), chap. XII, para. 228.

2/ Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination on its thirteenth session (E/CN.3/1991/2), para. 12.

3/ Information provided by the Federal Republic of Germany was sent in three completed questionnaires prepared by the Statistical Information System of the Federation (STATIS-BUND), the Press Office and the Publications Division of the Federal Statistical Office.

4/ Information provided by the National Statistical Co-ordination Board of the Philippines, together with the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics, Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics, Department of Economic Research of the Central Bank of the Philippines and the National Statistics Office.

5/ Information provided by the Office of Management and Budget of the United States included nine completed questionnaires prepared separately by the following United States agencies: Bureau of the Census and Bureau of Economic Analysis (Department of Commerce); Bureau of Labor Statistics; Office of Educational Research (Department of Education); Department of Health and Human Services; Energy Information Administration (Department of Energy); Internal Revenue Service (Department of the Treasury); National Agricultural Statistics Service and Economic Research Service (Department of Agriculture).

6/ Handbook of Statistical Organization (United Nations publication, Sales No. 54.XVII.7), p. 55 (out of stock). The revised edition was published in 1980 (Sales No. E.79.XVII.17) and reprinted in 1990.

7/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1985, Supplement No. 6 (E/1985/26), chap. II, para. 13.

8/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1989, Supplement No. 3 (E/1989/21), chap. II, para. 30.